November 8, 1988.

Carolyn

Dear Carolyn:

You may have already read it or heard it, I have resigned as executive director of NCBLG. There is no cause for concern. After three years, I simply have done my fair share of work in that capacity and now feel that I can best use that experience to play a different role in advancing the work of NCBLG. I look forward to being appointed to the board of directors of NCBLG as soon as it is possible and agreeable.

This letter is sent to you as a courtesy, and to request your continued support and involvement in NCBLG. Right now, we need your thoughts and suggestions as to who can best serve as the next executive director. Perhaps you may want to consider applying for this position, or perhaps you know of someone who should apply. In either case please see that an application reaches the search committee of the board of directors of NCBLG by close of business on Monday, December 15th, 1988. I have enclosed a job announcement with further instructions for your convenience.

Even though, as of the first of the new year, I will no longer be the executive director of NCBLG, it does not mean that I intend to disappear into the woodwork. My new job as director of minority affairs of the Midstate Video Network will keep me involved in an important institution of our community. I will probably be traveling as much as I did during my tenure with NCBLG. I will be working to help guide the organization deeperately needs as support its hard working staff. Please expect to hear from me, and probably see me on occasion. I look forward to both.

Sincerely,

PLEASE POST OR ANNOUNCE PLEASE POST OR ANNOUNCE

POSITION OPEN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
THE NATIONAL COALITION OF BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS

Executive director: The National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays; a progressive, national, membership organization, with local chapters, is dedicated to advancing the cause against racism, sexism, classism and homophobia while fostering Black pride and Lesbian and Gay Pride. The position is a full time one.

Responsibilities: Manage and supervise a small office and staff in Washington D.C. The executive director functions as the spokesperson for NCBLG and is directly accountable to a Board of Directors elected by the membership. Candidates should have a sincere and demonstrated interest in fairness and anti-discrimination issues, plus administrative, grant writing, fund-raising, public speaking, and lobbying experience. Women are encouraged to apply. NCBLG is offering a salary of between $15,000 and $18,000, depending on the level of experience of the applicant. A health benefit package will also be available.

Send resume with cover letter to the Search Committee, NCBLG, 930 F Street, N.W., Suite 514, Washington D.C. 20004.

Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m., Monday, December 15, 1986. Call (202) 737-5276 to receive a detailed job description.

NCBLG

National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays

P.O. Box 2490
Washington, D.C. 20013
(202) 265-7117

December 15, 1987

Executive Director
Renee McCoy
Washington, DC

Board of Directors

Angela Bowen
Co-chair
Boston, MA

Lawrence Washington
Co-chair
Washington, DC

Gilberto Gerald
Secretary
Washington, DC

Joseph F. Beam
Editor, Black/Out
Philadelphia, PA

Louis Hughes, Jr.
Baltimore, MD

Michelle Parkerson
Washington, DC

Clifton A. Roberson
Washington, DC

Barbara Smith
Albany, NY

Chapter Representatives

Mary Midgett
San Francisco Bay Area

Ken Mitchell
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Max Smith
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NCBLG, set up in similar fashion, has been in the trenches for nearly a decade. It is the ***only*** autonomous national organization devoted to addressing the issues and concerns of Black Lesbians and Gay men. Since our founding in 1978 we have provided a support and information network; sponsored two national Third World Lesbian and Gay Conferences; held an annual NCBLG convention; organized the first national conference on AIDS and the Black Community; worked in coalition with numerous organizations and individuals to combat homophobia, racism, and sexism; done outreach to prisoners; and published our official magazine, ***Black/Out.***

In 1988 we will celebrate our tenth anniversary year. Our decade of work has positively touched the lives of thousands of sisters and brothers, yet our level of paid membership remains low; consequently, we have made a commitment to add 1,000 new members by the time of our tenth anniversary convention in Washington, D.C. next October. In line with NCBLG's ongoing commitment to address Black Lesbian concerns and to gender parity on our board and in our chapters, we would like at least half the new members to be women.

We want you to know about us and to give us your moral and monetary support. We urge you to become a friend by pledging $1.00 a day. You may also be a donor, sustainer, supporter, regular member, student member or fixed-income member. We welcome memberships from all people who are supportive of NCBLG's goals. You will see all the options on the other side of this letter. Your membership helps to insure the success of our collective liberation. Choose your form of membership, and please be as generous as you can afford to be. We invite your presence.

In struggle for Lesbian & Gay Liberation,

Angela Bowen

Angela Bowen Co-chair,
National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays

Gil Gerald
Secretary

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Washington, D.C. 20013

membership	check box	monthly	quarterly
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SUSTAINER *(30¢ a day)*	☐ $99.50		$24.88
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CHAPTERS

BAY AREA BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS
437 Webster Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

D.C. COALITION OF BLACK GAY WOMEN AND MEN
P.O. Box 50662
Washington, D.C. 20004

IRUWA
P.O. Box 19146,
Minneapolis, MN 55419

ORGANIZING EFFORTS

BALTIMORE COALITION OF BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS
618 West Franklin Street
Apt. 6
Baltimore, MD 21201

LANGSTON/JONES
c/o Kohn,
P.O. Box 5061
New Orleans, LA 70150-0611

ST. LOUIS COALTION
c/o Elcan
3745 Lindell Blvd.
Apt. 1007W
St. Louis, MO 63108

PHILADELPHIA
James Roberts
c/o BLACK/OUT
P.O. Box 2413
Philadelphia, PA 19103

NEW YORK CITY
c/o Gwendolyn Rogers
230 Riverside Drive
Apt. 18A
New York, NY 10025

TRIANGLE COALITION
c/o Mandy Carter
604 West Chapel Hill Street
Durham, North Carolina 27701

TOPEKA, KS
Retha Simms
2641 S.E. 11th Street
Topeka, KS 66607

SAN DIEGO
James B. Newton III
4895 Deaton Drive
San Diego, CA 92101

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays (NCBLG) calls upon our Sisters and Brothers of African descent to join in:

Black Pride and Solidarity: The New Movement of Black Lesbians and Gays.

As a national organization, we are committed to building solidarity between Black Lesbians and Gays, Transpersons, and with our heterosexual Sisters and Brothers, with the understanding that an end to the oppression of Black people requires the full participation, dedication, and commitment of us all.

We are committed to fighting for an end to Lesbian and Gay oppression, racism, sexism, class oppression, militarism, and all the barriers which interfere with our right to live in peace and harmony. We stand in solidarity with movements for liberation and social justice.

We condemn the increasing racist attacks against the Black community, and other People of Color. We condemn the increasing right wing attacks against the Lesbian and Gay community. We condemn the refusal of the Reagan administration to provide adequate funding for AIDS and other health crises, while squandering funds to wage war.

We are the NATIONAL COALITION OF BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS (NCBLG), a national political and educational organization, providing support and advocacy for individuals and organizations on issues affecting the Black Lesbian and Gay community.

PURPOSES

1. to actively work against racism, sexism, ageism, classism, homophobia, and any other forms of discrimination within the Black community and the Gay community
2. to create positive attitudes between and among Black non-Gays and Black Gays
3. to improve the working and social relationship between and among Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
4. to raise the consciousness of Black Lesbians and Black Gay men on major local, national, and international issues
5. to stimulate wholesome and soulful sociopolitical atmospheres for Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
6. to work cooperatively with other national and local Lesbian/Gay organizations in the pursuit of Lesbian/Gay civil rights
7. to work cooperatively with other national and local Black organizations in the pursuit of human/civil rights
8. to support the struggles for human and civil rights for all including — but not limited to — women, youth, physically challenged, senior citizens, prisoners, Native Americans, Asians, Latin Americans, et al
9. to promote coalition building and unity among and between Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
10. to pursue political power and recognition in non-partisan, non-violent, but aggressive ways for the survival and growth/acceptance of ourselves as Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
11. to maintain and stress the beauty of Black culture and Lesbian/Gay culture, thereby projecting our motto: "As Proud of Our Gayness as We Are of Our Blackness"

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BLACK/BOARD

Calendar

July 25 thru July 27, 1986 — The Sea Gull Resort Hotel in Miami Beach is the site for the *Sixth Annual Gay and Lesbian Press Conference.* The conference will include election of board members, workshops, caucuses, entertainment, the GLPA Press Awards and much more. Registration is $65 and $105 for members and non-members respectively. For more information, contact: GLPA 1986 Convention, P.O. Box 7809, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

August 9 thru August 17, 1986 — Come Play at *Gay Games II,* an international festival of athletics and cultural activities in San Francisco, themed, "Triumph in '86." Sporting events include basketball, bowling, boxing, cycling, golf, racquetball, swimming, diving, volleyball, softball, and much, much more. For additional information please write San Francisco Arts & Athletics, Inc., 526 Castro Street, San Francisco, CA 94114, or call 415/885-2510.

November 28 thru November 30, 1986 — Los Angeles — *The International Lesbian/Gay People of Color Conference '86.* For more information please call Geneva Fernandez at 213/665-1485 or write to Steve Lew, Secretary, ILGPOCC, '86, 859 North Virgil Station D 145, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

Publications, Submissions

Lesbians of Color Anthology — We are currently compiling a Lesbian of color anthology that includes: diaries, short stores, letters, oral histories, journals, poems, autobiographies, theory, science fiction, essays, photographs, interviews, humor/cartoons and more. We are encouraging Lesbians of color to write and develop new forms of expression. We want to work with women who have not identified themselves as writers before and who have not had support for their work. We encourage all writers to contribute to this exciting anthology. Deadline is June 15, 1986. Write to Sistervision: Black Women and Women of Color Press, P.O. Box 217, Station E, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6H 4E2.

B. the International Newsletter of Black Men Who Love Black Men, a triannual, has published its premiere issue, which features personal advertisements, poetry, and info. To contribute, write to B., P.O. Box 263, New York, NY 10276.

Lesbian Coupling — Lynn Scott and Pam White are seeking essays for an anthology relating to Lesbian's coupling experience. We are asking for writing that expresses the important aspects of the love relationship. Please query with SASE if you are interested and we can send you our letter explaning our project. Submit queries to: Scott and White, Box 56, Millers Falls, MA 01349.

Changing Men (formerly *M: gentle men for gender justice),* the quarterly pro-feminist men's liberation magazine is seeking contributions by men of color for a special fall issue. Submissions may take the form of poetry, reviews, graphics, essays, short fictions, etc. Send submissions to *Changing Men,* 306 N. Brooks, Madison, WI 53715 by July 1, 1986.

Employment

The Portland Office of the American Friends Service Committee is looking for a *Gay/Lesbian Program Director.* The salary range is $20,000 with exact salary to be determined by level of skills and prior experience. Job responsibilities include: developing contacts in the Gay/Lesbian community including people of color and identifying ways of support; consulting with local and state Gay/Lesbian organizations to gain cooperation in development of a Gays and the Law Conference; and develop contacts with local and state religious organizations to identify support for Gay/Lesbian issues. *Application deadline is July 1, 1986.* For more information, write to: Ann Stever, c/o AFSC, 2249 E. Burnside, Portland, OR 97214 503/230-9427.

The Seattle Office of the American Friends Service Committee is looking for a *community Relations Program Director* who will work 3/5 time on Gay/Lesbian issues and the other 2/5 time on other community relations issues, such as immigration. The salary range is $20,000 with exact salary to be determined by level of skills and prior experience. The job responsibilties include the ones listed above plus close communication with staff in the National AFSC office dealing with immigrants' rights; distribute information to immigration communities, advocacy groups, and the general public; and provide minor assistance to local groups organizing specific events such as press conferences, demonstrations, and educational events. *Application deadline is July 1, 1986.* For more information, write to: Diane Narasaki, AFSC, 814 NE 40th Street, Seattle, WA 98105. 206/632-0500.

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BLACK/OUT

the survival kit for Black Lesbians and Gays

☐ 1 year (4 issues) $10.00

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Address _____

City/State _____

NCBLG's Executive Director's

Letter from Home

A Bi-Monthly Publication of the National Coalition of Black Lesbians & Gays

Renee McCoy
Executive Director

January - February, 1988 Vol.2, No.1

NCBLG Co-Sponsors National Conference

BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY ACTIVISTS TO CONVENE IN CALIFORNIA FOR THREE DAY MEETING

There will be a **National Black Lesbian and Gay Conference** held in Los Angeles on **February 12-14th, 1988**. The National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays is a co-sponsor of this conference together with the Los Angeles chapter of **BLACK & White Men Together**. The conference was originally concieved by several members of BWMT-LA, and other Black Lesbians and Gays in Los Angeles. NCBLG was invited to be a co-sponsor in November, and feels quite honored to lend support to this needed venture.

The theme of the conference is "**Leadership: What have we learned; What can we share?**". It will focus on the following areas: **creating and strengthening Black Lesbian and Gay institutions; building a stronger political voice; the quality of life and relationships; Black Lesbian and Gay enterprises and financial stability; and, AIDS in the Black Community.**

The conference will be held at the **University Hilton Hotel** in Los Angeles. Registration is $70.00 in advance and on-site. For more information phone (213) 664-4716 or (213) 667-2549, or write NCBLG, P.O. Box 29816, Los Angeles, CA, 90027.

ALTHOUGH NCBLG IS A CO-SPONSOR, THIS IS NOT OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE. JOIN US IN OCTOBER FOR NCBLG'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY HOMECOMING CONFERENCE. Details of that conference will be available soon.

NCBLG HIRES NEW OFFICE STAFF

If you have called the office in recent weeks you may have noticed a different voice answering the phone. That is the voice of Mr. **Edward Aaron**, NCBLG's new office staff person. Ed replaces the previous staff person, Glenn Jackson, who left the organization in December.

Ed is originally from Seattle, Washington, where he worked for the **Seattle Gay News**. He came to D.C. to work on the **National March on Washington** and decided to remain here after the March. In addition to having fine administrative skills, Ed is a talented artist. The backdrop of the stage for the **People of Color** rally for the March was designed and constructed by him.

Since NCBLG can only afford a part time office staff at this time, we have not been able to utilize all the gifts Ed brings to the organization. Hopefully, in the future our finances will allow him to be the full time Administrative Assistant that we so badly need. In the meantime Ed works Mondays, Wenesdays, and Fridays from 10am to 6pm.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

For the first time in almost ten years I was able to spend Christmas and New Years with my family in Detroit. My family has worked very hard throughout the years to understand and accept my sexuality. Theirs has been an especially difficult journey because of my involvement in Gay and Lesbian rights movement, and my somewhat high visability. The result, however, has been extremly heartwarming and strengthening for all of us.

My lover Deborah, her children and family also live in Detroit, so the holiday season was truely an experience of being home in the true sense of the word. Deborah and her son Rick and I bought a Christmas tree at the local farmer's market and decorated it my first afternoon there. This was the beginning of two weeks of fun and family and gifts and food, playing with children and animals, and building upon a foundation without which I feel I would surely perish.

An additional highlight was Deborah and I having the honor of hosting the Detroit Coalition's first night of Kwanzaa. More than twenty members of that local NCBLG affiliate came to our house to participate in a Kwanaa ceremony, which ended with us sharing a meal and partying until past midnight. The Detroit group celebrated the holiday each of the seven nights of Kwanzaa at the homes of various members.

This whole holiday experience reminded me of how important it is for Black people to be together from time to time, and of what a joy it is to be in the **National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays.**

NEW MEMBERS APPOINTED TO NCBLG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Four new members were added to the **National Coalition of Black Lesbian and Gay** Board of Directors at their December meeting. They are as follows:

CAROL JOHNSON - A union organizer from Chicago with experience in grassroots organizing internationally. Carol plans to concentrate on increasing membership in NCBLG.

JOAN DUNCAN - A psychologist and professor who lives in Connecticut and teaches in New York. Joan was previously on the board of the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**.

BARNELL SMITH - Brings more than twenty years of experience in organizational development and fundraising to NCBLG. Originally from Chicago Barnell is presently living in the D.C. area.

KATHY CHAVIS - Is an attorney living in Baltimore, whose activism dates back to her undergraduate years.

(Continued on next page.)

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There are still vacancies on the Board. Interested persons are urged to contact the national office. We are especially seeking persons from the west coast, south and mid-west.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Since the last EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER FROM HOME, the Black Lesbian and Gay Community has lost two fine role models and committed activists for human rights:

Reverend CHARLES ANGEL

Died of AIDS the day after Thanksgiving, in New York City. Rev. Angel was the founder of Gay Men of African Descent, a board member of the People With AIDS Coalition, active with other countries and on the steering board of NCBLG's New York organizing effort. He devoted his life to activities designed to upgrade the lives of Black Lesbians and Gays. He was courageous and outspoken, warm and sensitive, unselfish and caring. Charles was a friend and brother and pastor to many. He will be missed in the souls of many of us.

Writer/Activist JAMES BALDWIN

Died of stomach cancer November 30th, aged sixty-three at his home in southern France. His list of literary contributions include eight novels, six collections of essays, four plays, and numerous poetic compositions. His best known works, Notes of a Native Son, Nobody Knows My Name and The Fire Next Time, are considered among the finest examples of contemporary American literature. His contributions to the world will live for generations to come, and he will remain one of the finest Black Gay role models of our times.

A CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

All of us know about the racist conditions under which the Black South African must live, and how the government of that country continues to escalate its oppression of non-whites. However, it is important for us to be aware also of other acts of oppression taking place around the world.

In Malaysia over 100 persons have been arrested and detained without trial under that country's Internal Security Act. The primary purpose of these detentions is to suppress and silence social and political activists. However, these acts of censorship also reflect the racist attitudes of that government, since most of those detained are Chinese and Indians.

To express your outrage at this violation of human rights, write your congressperson. For more information contact **Amnesty International USA, 608 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,Washington, DC, 20005,** or call (202) 544-0200.

****

The unlawful detention of Blacks and persons who oppose the racist government of South Africa continues as we begin a new year. Most recently the religious community in South Africa has called for help to stop the detention and harassment of church people who have been targeted because they proclaim that Apartheid is a sin.

Your support is needed to continue the pressure to release detainees in South Africa.

- Write letters demanding the release of all detainees and political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia.

Send to: **Ambassador Peter Koornhof**
South African Embassy
3105 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

SOUL FOOD: A Meditation

As we begin a new year, I find it so difficult to be hopeful and excited about tomorrow when so many yesterdays were filled with death and suffering. That awful disease, AIDS, was not destroyed last year and it looks as if it will live on for many years to come. We continue to face the raw facts that:

- 25% of all AIDS cases are Black people
- 14% of all AIDS cases are Hispanic people
- 1% of all AIDS cases are Asian and Native American
- 57% of all the children with AIDS are Black children
- 24% of all the children with AIDS are Hispanic children
- 51% of all the women with AIDS are Black women
- 25% of all the women with AIDS are Hispanic women

Drugs continue to destroy our communities. Poverty, poor education, poor health care, ignorance, racism, homophobia, and sexism limit our possibilities daily. Loneliness, betrayal, fear stand in our faces and across our paths...

If we think about all of the above for more than a few moments, its a wonder we all just did'nt find a cave and move into it on January 1. Most of us certainly could have found enough reason!

The good news is that we did not, have not and will not give up and into hopelessness, fear and discouragement.

As we begin this new year, let us take the time to meditate upon one simple fact: Although we were challenged we were not destroyed. Let us take time to plot our courses which must lead to greater victories and higher-quality lives. Our journeys this year must lead each of us to do AIDS prevention education. No one of us is totally safe from the disease--not lesbians, not the celibate, not those in monogamous relationships, not those of us who don't <u>call</u> ourselves gay. Our words to one another regardless of sexuality, race, gender or economic level must include **"Unprotected sex puts one at risk. AIDS is an equal opportunity disease which kills. Education is the only answer".**

In developing our journeys for 1988, we must further speak words of encouragement, affirmation, and hope to one another. We must first realize what a gift each of us is to and in the world; and celebrate our beauty and presence. Take time this year to look at yourself and see just how beautiful you are today, and make plans to enhance that beauty this year. Think about how intelligent and sensitive and sensuous and strong and powerful and lovable you are today, and activate a plan to grow in each area each day of this year.

The good news for 1988 is that hope is alive, beauty is alive, love is alive...because you are alive.

CELEBRATE YOUR HERITAGE!! REMEMBER THAT FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH!!!

NCBLG - PO Box 2490, Washington, D.C., 20013 - (202) 265-7117

BLACK/OUT

The Magazine of the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays • Volume 2 Number 1 Fall 1988 $6

tenth anniversary edition

NCBLG

celebrates

HOMECOMING

NCBLG

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays (NCBLG) calls upon our Sisters and Brothers of African descent to join in:

Black Pride and Solidarity: The New Movement of Black Lesbians and Gays.

As a national organization, we are committed to building solidarity between Black Lesbians and Gays, Transpersons, and with our heterosexual Sisters and Brothers, with the understanding that an end to the oppression of Black people requires the full participation, dedication, and commitment of us all.

We are committed to fighting for an end to Lesbian and Gay oppression, racism, sexism, class oppression, militarism, and all the barriers which interfere with our right to live in peace and harmony. We stand in solidarity with movements for liberation and social justice.

We condemn the increasing racist attacks against the Black community, and other People of Color. We condemn the increasing right wing attacks against the Lesbian and Gay community. We condemn the refusal of the Reagan administration to provide adequate funding for AIDS and other health crises, while squandering funds to wage war.

We are the NATIONAL COALITION OF BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS (NCBLG), a national political and educational organization, providing support and advocacy for individuals and organizations on issues affecting the Black Lesbian and Gay community.

PURPOSES

1. to actively work against racism, sexism, ageism, classism, homophobia, and any other forms of discrimination within the Black community and the Gay community
2. to create positive attitudes between and among Black non-Gays and Black Gays
3. to improve the working and social relationship between and among Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
4. to raise the consciousness of Black Lesbians and Black Gay men on major local, national, and international issues
5. to stimulate wholesome and soulful sociopolitical atmospheres for Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
6. to work cooperatively with other national and local Lesbian/Gay organizations in the pursuit of Lesbian/Gay civil rights
7. to work cooperatively with other national and local Black organizations in the pursuit of human/civil rights
8. to support the struggles for human and civil rights for all including — but not limited to — women, youth, physically challenged, senior citizens, prisoners, Native Americans, Asians, Latin Americans, et al
9. to promote coalition building and unity among and between Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
10. to pursue political power and recognition in non-partisan, non-violent, but aggressive ways for the survival and growth/acceptance of ourselves as Black Lesbians and Black Gay men
11. to maintain and stress the beauty of Black culture and Lesbian/Gay culture, thereby projecting our motto: "As Proud of Our Gayness as We Are of Our Blackness"

CHAPTERS

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BLACK/OUT

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The appearance of names or pictorial images in this publication does not indicate the sexual orientation of that person or persons. *Editorial Policy:* Black/Out is a magazine by, for and about Black Lesbians and Gay men. We will not print words or images we deem racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, etc. We welcome your letters and comments. We encourage you to submit artwork and writings. Letters and submissions should be typed double-spaced and in the instances of submissions for publication, a SASE should be included. Mail to: 19641 West Seven Mile, Detroit, MI 48219.

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REPRINTS:
★ Gay Community News
★★ Bay Windows
★★★ New York Native
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From the Editor

Welcome to the tenth anniversary edition of Black/Out. As we move into our second decade with excitement and purpose, we embrace the responsibility to sustain the magazine as our valued and vibrant voice in the new movement of Black Lesbians and Gays.

With this issue, the editorship of Black/Out changes hands. NCBLG salutes and honors Joseph Beam for his leadership in launching the new magazine two years ago. His creative vision and energy set the standard which I and any future editors must strive to live up to. May we be equal to the task. And the challenge.

NCBLG's own challenge more clearly defines itself as well. We must move forward in ever increasing numbers, calling on the best within us in order to demand the best from our own families, our churches and our Black institutions and those who run them-those who call themselves leaders of our people.

The more we as Black Lesbains and Gay men link arms, minds and spirits to reach within ourselves for strength, the more we can challenge them to reach within to find their better selves. When we step forward and say with courage, "We are your brothers, sisters, children, mothers, fathers, teachers, entertainers, friends, and we are as proud of our Gayness as we are of our Blackness."- then we will have the right to name ourselves, *the new movement of Black Lesbians and Gays.*

This issue of Black/Out really is about challenge: hooking into the Jesse Jackson Campaign and demanding to be taken seriously; Black Gay men instituting suits against the U.S. Government; a Black Lesbian insisting that we deal with one another beyond skin color; and much more.

May this special Black/Out anniversary issue provide you with much to ponder and with tools to

Keep Up The Good Fight,
Angela Bowen
Editor

THE DETROIT COALITION

congratulates and salutes

N C B L G

on your tenth anniversary

The Langston/Hughes
chapter of NCBLG
pays loving tribute
to NCBLG
on your tenth anniversary
May we grow together

Best Wishes for 100 more years

from

C C B L G

The Chicago Coaliton

Ten Years Ago: Ten Years Ahead

by Renee McCoy, Executive Director

Ten years ago the earth shifted ever so slightly. Few noticed the event. Few heard the rumble. Even fewer acknowledged the debris falling all around them. Black Lesbians and Gays had been falling in broken pieces for so long that it was commonly thought that to be Black and Lesbian or Gay was indeed to be shattered. What caused the shift was the voices of Black Lesbians and Gays in various parts of the country screaming in unison "No More!" No more invisibility. No more powerlessness. No more self-hatred, self-doubt, and self-fear. No more loneliness and despair. No more dependency upon the "the other" to address our concerns and meet our needs. No more.

Out of these voices the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays was born. Looking back at those early days fills my heart with wonder that the organization has survived for so long, as well as some disappointment that it is not the great institution many of us had hoped it would be by now. At the very core of my being, however, is a feeling of overwhelming joy at our ability to have survived, and at our vast potential for growth and progressive change.

In many ways, NCBLG was born of dreamers. Its leaders grew up watching and walking in civil rights marches, and listening to Martin and Malcolm assure our communities that liberation was our birthright. To be involved in the struggle for Gay rights just seemed a natural place to be. Little did we know how difficult that task would be as it unfolded in the face of homophobia in the Black community and racism in the Gay and Lesbian communities. Ten years ago the world looked like such a simple place and freedom appeared imminent.

However, the first decade of NCBLG has been far from simple. Those years have been fraught with struggle and despair and criticism, leaving little time to notice the victories taking place in the face of struggle, the hope born from the tears of despair, and the vast accomplishments which have occurred in spite of the criticism. As we prepare for

our second decade it is crucial that we take time now to celebrate our past and direct our future.

The National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays is the first organization in this country designed to address the needs and concerns of Black Lesbians and Gays. In earlier times the organization sought to include any and all issues affecting peoples of color. Our first conference in 1979 attempted just that. Hours into the agenda of that conference it became painfully clear that such a goal was impossible, for, although there were many areas in which all Third World persons were commonly oppressed, our experiences of oppression were different because of the differences in culture and history. This realization brought about much agony and criticism at the time. However, it was at that conference that many had first-time experiences of meeting and talking with other Lesbians and Gays of their own race. Those connections remain today. It is such a joy to know that some of the founders of other organizations of people of color met one another for the very first time at NCBLG's 1979 conference. It is an even greater joy that many who attended that event have maintained strong connections with NCBLG over the years and mutual support has been provided across racial lines. We must celebrate our willingness not to be in control of the liberation process of all peoples of color, yet our next decade must find us offering more tangible support to other organizations addressing the concerns of other oppressed groups, and networking and working in coalition with them.

A weakness of NCBLG this past decade has been in communicating with and nurturing our membership. There are many reasons for that and no excuses. The fact that the organization has a national presence and enjoys the respect of many other local, regional, and national organizations is cause for celebration. Our vision for the future, however, includes a strong and sincere commitment to consistent communication with our membership. We now have a larger board of directors with wider geographic representation. This board works to create ways of facilitating ongoing communication and works to raise the funds necessary to stay in touch effectively.

Since its beginning, many have expected NCBLG to meet the basic, everyday needs of Black Lesbians and Gays, i.e., personal support and direct services. Our first ten years have been primarily politically focused, leaving the individual feeling somewhat forgotten. We must celebrate the political inroads we have made, for without them many progressive changes would not have occurred in that arena. Our next decade, however, will find NCBLG adding direct services and personal support to its agenda. Plans are underway for a national hotline for Black Lesbians and Gays. Our local chapters are being encouraged to become more involved in direct service programs as well, especially in the area of AIDS. Plans are being formulated to better serve the large

number of prisoners who contact the national office. We now have the capability to do more local referrals for individuals seeking counseling. Our network of chapters and organizing efforts has grown to include Dallas, Seattle, Boston, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Milwaukee, and Denver. And in the coming years we will be better able to provide the kind of technical assistance that will help these groups flourish and grow strong.

In 1986 NCBLG hosted the first AIDS in the Black Community conference. That same year we entered into a subcontract with the District of Columbia, together with the D.C. chapter, to provide local AIDS education. We produced and distributed one of the first AIDS brochures for the Black community. Yet, we have not been as active and visible in the area of AIDS as we need and want to be. Yet, we proudly acknowledge that NCBLG was one of the first organizations to address AIDS, and the first national organization to address the effects of the disease on the Black community. As AIDS escalates daily, it is painfully apparent that the Black community is only slightly concerned about the number of Black homosexuals dying from the disease. NCBLG will increase efforts in AIDS education in the coming months and years. Our work in this area will also expand to include Lesbian issues and basic sexuality education. (NCBLG recently received a subcontract with the National Minority AIDS Council to provide AIDS education to Black Lesbians and Gays, beginning in October, 1988.)

Since its inception, NCBLG has voiced a commitment to women's issues and to the inclusion of women in its leadership. During this first decade, however, we have fallen somewhat short of that goal. Not unlike other organizations, sexism has existed in NCBLG. At the same time time, we can celebrate that women have always been visible in the organization. There has always been a woman co-chair, and women have been in the majority on the board of directors for several years. NCBLG is also one of the few national organizations of any kind to have a woman executive director. In our next decade there will be more programs designed to address the concerns of Black Lesbians, i.e., parenting, sexism in the Black Gay community, violence against women, Lesbian relationships, Lesbian health concerns, etc.

Finally, NCBLG has always been plagued by financial difficulties which have greatly limited overall programming. We are primarily thankful that the organization has survived, doing the best we could with what we had. Our vision for the future is that we have more with which to work. Plans are underway to make NCBLG more financially stable so that we can more effectively serve our communities. We are also concerned about local chapters becoming more financially secure. Toward these ends, we have increased our membership fees; we have instituted a membership plan which returns funds to local initiatives; we have expanded our search for funding sources and begun aggressive fundraising strategies. In the coming decade, NCBLG will be in position to carry out programs addressing an array of concerns facing Black Lesbians and Gays, i.e., leadership development, homophobia in the Black community, domestic violence in the Lesbian and Gay community, coming out, literacy, youth, and more. Our plans include regional skills conferences focusing on local fundraising, grass roots organizing, networking and local political action. NCBLG will also establish a national speakers bureau in the coming year.

Voices continue to shout, "No More"; the earth continues to shift; and this movement is continually being re-born. We invite your voice and your participation in directing the future for Black Lesbians and Gays through the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays. Our greatest celebration is that although not enough have been a part of NCBLG, many have helped bring the organization this far. Our possibilities for the coming decade are limitless, and there is room for your vision and the inclusion of your issues if only you believe as we have believed: actively! The next decade awaits your presence! □

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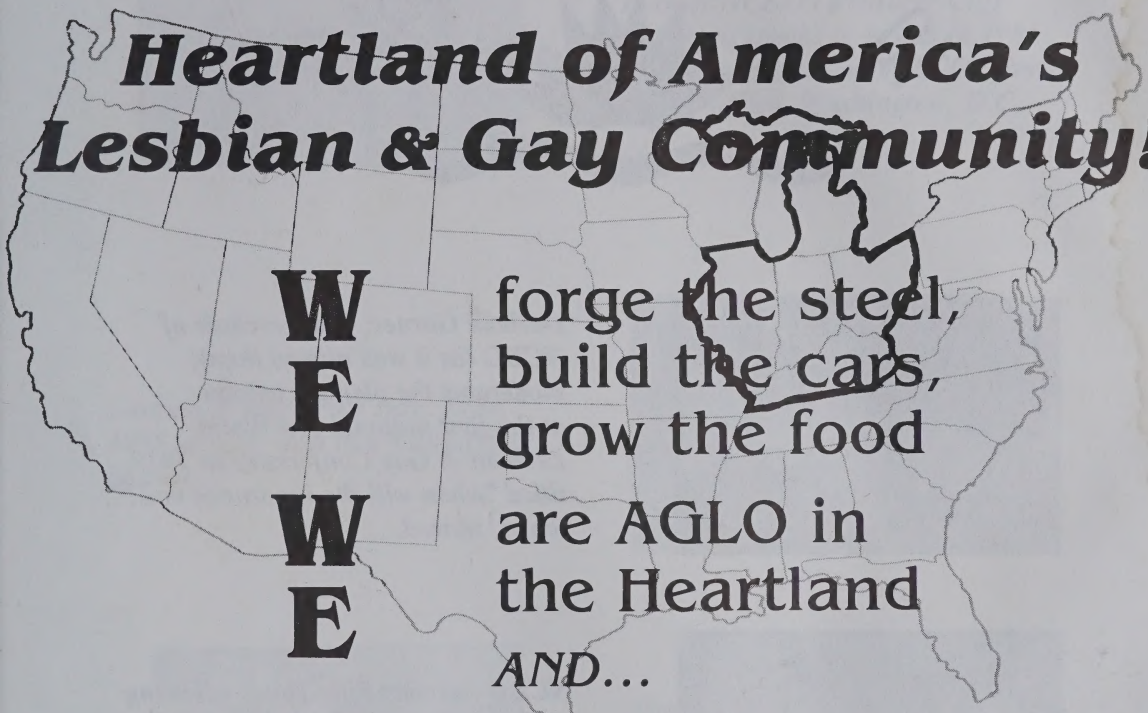

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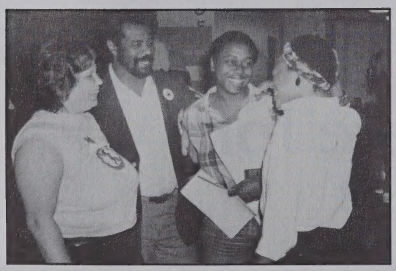
313 / 537-6647

Stonewall Cincinnati – Cincinnati, Ohio
513 / 221-GAYS

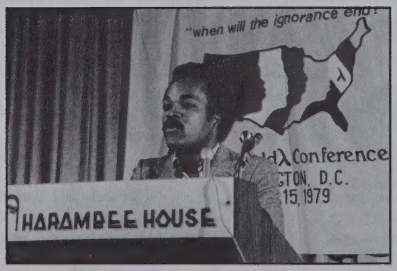
10 YEARS OF NCBLG

Darlene Garner, first co-chair of NCBG (as it was named then), moderates the plenary session at the first national 3rd World Lesbian & Gay Conference in 1979, titled "when will the ignorance end?" when, indeed.



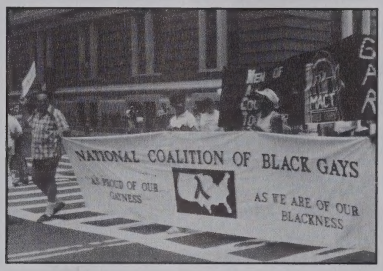
NCBG founder Billy Jones speaking with participants at the 1979 Conference. Billy now does his good work for the Whitman-Walker Clinic.

Gil Gerald addresses plenary at the same conference, which was held at Harambee House, now the Howard Inn, where NCBLG's '88 Homecoming Conference takes place. You can *go home again.*



Former NCBLG treasurer Cliff Roberson speaks to guests in 1984 at an open house at NCBLG's first staffed office, Washington, D.C.

Lesbian & Gay Pride Day, June 1985 in NYC with that beautiful banner.



Former NCBLG secretary Gwen Rogers gives one of her rousing speeches at a closing session during the "U.N. Decade for Women Conference" in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 1985

Mabel Hampton receiving her "Mabel Hampton Award" in recognition of her lifelong affirmation of Black pride and Lesbian/Gay pride.

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In a long line of precedent-setting legal battles, Lambda's staff attorneys and its national network of volunteer lawyers have helped improve the quality of lesbian and gay lives.

Today, in the time of AIDS, Lambda remains devoted to the basic civil liberties at the heart of our struggle for justice and acceptance. Lambda's priorities include:

- ►relationship rights
- ►custody and adoption rights
- ►employment discrimination
- ►the right to privacy
- ►first amendment rights of speech and association

Lambda's legal arguments help educate judges, juries, lawyers, media and the public about our needs. And Lambda extends this role through publications and conferences that it organizes and funds.

Today, Lambda is led by a national Board of Directors composed of equal numbers of women and men – as is our legal staff. Since 1973, we have depended on contributions from individuals to carry out our work. Now more than ever, **Lambda needs the strength and support its members alone provide.** Please add your strength to ours by joining Lambda today!

Membership

Annual membership in Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund brings you our quarterly newsletter and invitations to events and meetings throughout the year. Membership also entitles you to discounts on publications and select events. **All contributions are tax-deductible and all names are kept confidential.**

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CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF ADVOCACY FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS 1973–1988

Over the past several years, hundreds of us have responded to questionnaires in two separate studies of our lives and relationships as Black Lesbians and Gay men. Since most of us do not frequent psychiatric conferences or read psychiatric journals, we were not aware of the outcome. Here, in the depth we deserve and in accessible language, Craig Harris brings us the results.

BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS: *EMPIRICALLY SPEAKING*

C. Craig G. Harris

Over the past two decades, as a result the civil rights and gay liberation movements, both the Black and gay communities have experienced an increase in societal recognition and, to a limited extent, acceptance. However, because of their double minority status, Black lesbians and gay men are often considered invisible within both the Black and gay communities, as well as the larger society.

One of the manifestations of this invisibility is that Black lesbians and gay men are referred to, written about, discussed, and relegated to parenthetical asides by white gays and Black non-gays alike on the basis of conjecture. There are a few exceptional voices of Black lesbian/gay writers and political activists which speak from experience of the complications and complexities of living as a member of two alienated groups of society. One wonders, though, whether these accounts are representative of the experiences of the larger Black lesbian/gay community.

Two recent psychological studies based on surveys of the attitudes, perceptions and behavioral patterns of Black lesbians and gay men have given voice to a larger cross-section of the Black lesbian/gay community, as well as an empirical basis for conclusions drawn about the lives of these double-minority members. "The Black Women's Relationship Project: A National Survey of Black Lesbians" (Mays, Cochran, Peplau, 1986) and "Influence of Assimilation on the Psychosocial Adjustment of Black Homosexual Men" (Johnson, 1981) are the two studies which were conducted in the state of California.

Dr. Vickie M. Mays of the Department of Psychology of the University of California, Los Angeles, addressed the issue of the lack of social science research on Black lesbians at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA) in Washington, D.C. on August 25, 1986, saying, "Black lesbians are relatively invisible in our society. Despite popular stereotypes, we actually know very little about their lives. Research on lesbians... has generally focused on Anglos. In a recent search of psychological research on lesbians using Dialogues and Psych Information databases, (Dr. Susan) Cochran found that only two of over three hundred references contained 'Black women' in the title or abstract. Turning to the social science literature on Black women also provides little assistance. In compiling a forthcoming bibliography on materials on Black women in the area of social science and mental health, I found over 2,100 references to Black women, but not a single empirically based article or review on Black lesbians other than those I had myself written."

Mays attributed the absence of empirical data on the lives of Black lesbians to two factors, stating, "First, social scientists have, for the most part, neglected sexual orientation as a variable of interest in psychological research in general. Psychology, while well developed in race relations research, particularly with Black Americans, has not yet incorporated sexual orientation as a variable of interest to any great extent. Yet, like gender or ethnicity, sexual orientation represents a social status characteristic that can have important implications. Potentially, it can structure an individual's experiences of being in the world and expectations for social interactions.

"A second possible reason for the dearth of research on Black lesbians is that much of the current research on the lives of lesbians arose out of feminist academic roots. To approach the topic of Black lesbians adequately requires the melding of both the race relations literature and research on gays and lesbians, generally a unique combination. But to draw on one body of knowledge without the other bodes poorly for capturing the experiences of Black lesbians."

Dr. Julius M. Johnson expressed similar frustration over the lack of available research on the psychosocial adjustment of Black gay men in the introduction of his doctoral dissertation for the California School of Professional Psychology, Berkeley Campus. In Johnson's words, "While the myths of the homosexual community [portray it] as a melting pot attracting homosexuals and lesbians from all racial and cultural backgrounds, ... the professional and popular literature have not reflected this scene of racial or cultural diversity. As an area of investigation, the general study of homosexuality has rarely included Black homosexual males among its research samples. References to homosexuality among Black men or within the Black culture have rarely been supported by em-

pirical data."

Referring to the psychological studies on gay men conducted between 1967 and 1980, Johnson goes on to say, "Few of these studies have addressed the experience of Black homosexual males. Most of the rapidly growing body of literature on homosexuality have used urban based, middle class Caucasians as subjects. These studies have also tended to focus primarily on subjects who, by virtue of their visibility and accessibility, have identified with the emerging homosexual world. While other studies have addressed the differential involvement of homosexual subjects in the homosexual and heterosexual worlds, these studies have not explored the continued relationship their subjects have maintained with their original ethnic or reference groups."

This continued relationship of subjects with their ethnic group was a large part of the data that the team of Dr. Vickie M. Mays (UCLA), Dr. Susan D. Cochran (California State University, Northridge), and Dr. Letitia Anne Peplau (UCLA) set out to collect. Methodology was a major concern in the collection of this data since previous research on homosexuality and lesbianism reflected ethnocentric, male, heterosexist, or class bias. In order to better understand the complexities and differences among Black lesbians in regard to their relational experiences, the search team designed the Black Lesbian Survey with special attention to validity and ethnic/cultural context sensitivity.

Mays contends that research on Black Americans has been hampered by the inapplicability of standard measures and procedures of survey data collection. "The National Survey of Black Americans, " according to Mays, "clearly demonstrated the need for specialized procedures across all aspects of research design, data collection, and analysis."

When Mays, Cochran, and Peplau began their research nearly four years ago, they began with a pilot study using extensive individual tape-recorded interviews with Black lesbians to gather information on women's perceptions of how discrimination influenced their interpersonal relationships and participation in various community activities. They later conducted two focus groups, one with single Black lesbians and the other with Black lesbians in a relationship. These focus groups helped to identify relevant issues in relationship values, social support, community participation and sources of discrimination. The focus groups helped the research team make decisions regarding appropriate language and meaningful concepts to be included in the questionnaire.

Recruiting Black lesbians from around the country to participate in the study was no easy task. According to Mays, "Several organizations and social and political groups, including the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, mailed the questionnaires to their lesbian members. Participants who returned the questionnaire were also given the opportunity to separately return a post card requesting additional information for friends... The questionnaire was also distributed at several major lesbian events throughout the United States. In addition, press releases were periodically mailed to lesbian and gay newspapers such as *GCN, Off Our Backs,* or *The Washington Blade,* all of which have a sizeable Black lesbian readership."

By August 1986, after approximately fifteen months of data collection , the team of Mays, Cochran, and Peplau had received responses from 450 self-identified Black lesbians and 61 bisexual women. This represented a 25% rate of return.

The women who responded ranged in age from 18 to 59, with the mean average being 33. Most described themselves as being somewhat religious, and were, for the most part, well educated. Nearly half reported having completed a college education or more, and most held jobs (84% were employed at least half time).

The average respondent decribed herself as coming from a middle class background (the median yearly income for the group was $17,500). About one third of the sample had children, one third lived alone, another third lived with their partner. Two thirds of the sample were involved in a serious/committed relationship at the time of their response. While responses were received from around the country, the largest portion came from the West Coast (primarily California), followed by the East Coast.

Johnson's study, which focused on Black gay men in the Bay Area, used similar methods to attract subjects. During February and March of 1980, Johnson distributed "colorful, informational flyers" describing the research throughout areas of San Francisco commonly thought of as social or residential centers for Black gay men. The flyers were posted in bars, laundries and parks, and on buses and bulletin boards along selected areas of Castro, Polk, Folsom, and upper Height streets. Initial flyers which were posted in Black residential areas were torn down or "otherwise removed," according to Johnson, but new flyers were posted. Each one included a tear-off listing the number of a 24 hour telephone contact for those requiring further information or wishing to volunteer as a research subject.

Print media served as a vehicle to recruit Black gay subjects. Two local lesbian/gay newspapers, *The Sentinel*, and *Bay Area Reporter*, published notices, as did the *Sun Reporter,* which caters to mainstream Black readership.

A research assistant distributed flyers to Black men attending selected gay discos and bars. Throughout the subject recruitment phase, anyone expressing interest in the project was encouraged to discuss the research with friends as a means of increasing the number of samples.

Unlike the procedure for data collection in the "Black Lesbian Survey," potential subjects for Johnson's study were required to signal their interest in the project by an initial telephone contact, wherein "each subject was provided a detailed description of the overall project and given the opportunity to ask the primary investigator's background or intent in this topic:" In addition, all subjects were offered a $5.00 allowance for completing the 52 page questionnaire (though less than one fourth of the respondents actually requested payment).

One hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed by mail to potential subjects, and 60 of these were completed and returned, representing a return rate of 40%. This return rate is considered high because of the length of the questionnaire and the lack of familiarity with the investigator.

Over half the respondents were between the ages of 26 and 35, with 33% being 25 or younger, and 15% being 36 or older. Only 17% of the subjects had not received a formal education beyond high school, with 37% holding undergraduate degrees or higher. The incomes of these men were significantly lower than those of the women who participated in the Mays, Cochran, Peplau study, even with the five year cost of living increase differential taken into account. Thirty two percent of the subjects earned

Less than $5,000 per annum, 38% earned between $5,000 and $9,999, 23% earned between $10,000 and $14,999, 15% earned above $15,000.

Johnson divided the subjects into two groups of Black gay men to note operational differences as a result of primary reference group identity. The criteria used was a "forced choice" question located near the middle of the questionnaire, which read: "Which minority membership is most important to you?" Thirty-one subjects responded that "being Black" was most important, while twenty identified "being gay" as more important. Of the remaining nine respondents, five indicated that both minority memberships were of equal importance, and four declined to answer.

On the basis of the two primary reference group identities, four hypotheses of the psychosocial adjustment of these men were tested. The hypotheses supposed that:

1. The Black-identified group would show significantly lower mean scores on the dependent variables involving: happiness, exuberance, overtness, self-acceptance, and acceptance of professional help;

2. The gay-identified group would show significantly lower mean scores on dependent variables involving: psychosomatic complaints, loneliness, depression, paranoia, tension, and suicidal feelings and impulses;

3. The Black-identified group would show significantly higher mean scores on dependent variables involving: interactions with other Blacks, and attitudes toward Blacks; and

4. The gay-identified group would show significantly higher mean scores on dependent variables involving: interactions with other homosexuals, acceptance of homosexuality, interactions with whites, and attitiudes toward whites.

Although each of these hypotheses was based on a well-developed rationale, the results were mixed.

The findings revealed that, contrary to the expectations set forth in hypotheses 1 and 2, there were very few differences in the psychological adjustment of the two groups of Black gay men. The results did confirm, however, the theories projected in hypotheses 3 and 4 indicating that significant differences existed between the patterns of social adjustment of Black-identified and gay-identified men.

Black-identified respondents were as likely to indicate similar feelings of happiness, exuberance, and self-acceptance as their gay-identified peers. Only the two dependent variables, overtness and acceptance of professional help, were able to statitically distinguish the two groups. The Black-identified respondents, as anticipated, tended to report a lower sense of overtness in general, and in relation to family and friends. Of the two groups, more heterosexual friends of the gay-identified subjects were aware of the individuals' homosexuality. The Black-identified respondents also reported more feelings of awarkness in regard to public displays of affection with other men, and were more prone to avoid disclosure of their homosexual interest.

One unexpected finding was that Black-identified subjects reported that they were significantly more apt to discuss their personal and emotional problems with friends and other mental health professionals. This group also tended to report more often that they had "felt particularly excited or interested in something" than did the gay-identified respondents.

The anticipations of hypothesis 2: that the gay-identified group would report a stronger sense of integration or assimilation into the suppportive gay community – experiencing less loneliness, paranoia, depression, psychosomatic complaints, and suicidal impulses or feelings – were also proven incorrect. The analysis of the data did not support the generally held assumption "that the experiences of one reference group produced a differentially disruptive impact on the psychological well-being of Black homosexual males than the other."

Black-identified respondents maintained greater interactions with other Blacks, as anticipated in hypothesis 3, and also reported a significantly higher proportion of Black males as sexual partners during the previous 12 months; tended to prefer another Black male as their lover ideal; felt relatively more comfortable in an all Black setting; and felt a relative lower sense of isolation from the Black community. These men also reported that a significantly higher percentage of their

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movie review

SCHOOL DAZE

Written and directed by Spike Lee
Reviewed by Kate Rushin ★★★★★

Spike Lee became the most controversial and widely known Black filmmaker in the U.S. with the success of his low-budget sex comedy, "She's Gotta Have It" (1986). Everybody was waiting for the next "Spike Lee Joint." This time around he'd gotten Big Money from Columbia Pictures. Word was he would "tell all" about Black college/fraternity life, even going so far as to expose preoccupations with skin color and "good" and "bad" hair. The news that he had gotten put off the Morehouse campus where the film was being made was seen as a sign that Spike was *really* doing it. Spike (Uplift The Race) Lee was making a movie for and about Black folks.

Lee's sprawling, bodacious humor is undergirded by questions that are of crucial concern to Afro-Americans.

"School Daze," set at a Black college during Homecoming Weekend, focuses on the conflicts among Dap, the anti-apartheid activist; Julien, the Gamma fraternity president; and Half-Pint, the hapless but determined Gamma pledge. These characters are familiar in ways seldom seen in Hollywood films or on network television. Crammed with images, sight-gags and one-liners, the film offers a range of music rarely heard on a single soundtrack (including "Da Butt" which made it to the top of the charts). A host of talented actors and musicians contributed to the project, including Joe Seneca, Ossie Davis, Phyllis Hyman, Stevie Wonder, Pieces of a Dream and Branford Marsalis.

Lee's sprawling, bodacious humor is undergirded by questions that are of crucial concern to Afro-Americans: what values should have priority in Black organizations? Who controls and supports Black colleges? What are our standards of beauty and what effect do they have on us? What are our connections and obligations to other Black people? What does it mean to be a responsible adult?

Unfortunately, the movie, often fragmented and disjointed, raises these questions but rarely resolves them. Situations are created and left hanging. As the story progresses, musical numbers seem less connected to the plot. Some scenes, such as the football game, are totally boring. This may be due to the fact that Lee lost his original location and consequently had to attempt to manufacture the energy and excitement of a real, live football game. It fell flat and unconvincing.

One highlight of the film is an outrageous singing/dancing duel between the straight-haired, lighter-skinned women (The Wannabees) and the kinky-haired, darker-skinned women (The Jigaboos). It exposes the real and very painful issue of color and hair ranking which has had such a devastating effect on Black people, especially women. Lee addresses the problem powerfully and directly (and has taken heat from within the Black community for doing so), but doesn't take it to a deep enough level. There is no self-examination, no change, no growth in the end. The women remain stuck in their stereotypes and misconceptions of one another; and the men, like Spike Lee himself, never have to confront their role in perpetuating the divisions among the women.

Lee has stated that his films are directed to a Black audience—that he is not interested in explaining Black people to white people. Clearly, the power of his work is rooted in that vision. But he sometimes uses a visual and verbal shorthand requiring knowledge and experiences he cannot assume to be shared by all Black people in his audience. For instance, Lee understands the destructiveness of color prejudice and how our sense of our own beauty can be distorted by racism. However, understanding it and conveying it in the movie are two different things.

Although Lee doesn't delve deeply enough into the color consciousness he attempts to confront, his sincerity and understanding are evident. What comes across also, however, is his lack of consciousness regarding sexism and heterosexism. Even the presence of Rachel—Dap's girlfriend, a believable character with a mind of her own—is not enough to counter the overall effects of the sexist language and images that permeate the film. The men gay-bait each other and refer to women as freaks. At one particularly low point, Lee juxtaposes images of women and cats. In a puzzling plot resolution, Julien, the antagonist, decides to help Half Pint lose his virginity so that he can be acceptable to the Gammas.

In a scene reminiscent of the sex-as-punishment scene at the end of "She's Gotta Have It," Julien coerces his girlfriend Jane into "giving it up" to Half Pint (while the brothers wait outside the room in the hall),

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LOVERS' CHOICE

Becky Birtha

Seal Press, Seattle, 1987
$8.95 paper, 152pp.

Reviewed by Angela Bowen

BOOK REVIEW

Becky Birtha can give you a good read. A group of us sat one afternoon reading aloud from her latest book, *Lovers' Choice.* We were fortunate to have picked the first and last stories, since these are two of the best, and serve to anchor the collection beautifully. Several days later, I dug into the rest of the book, and it became an up and down journey.

This, Birtha's second volume, begins with an adolescent and ends with an old Lesbian looking back on her years with her deceased lover. The remaining stories generally fall into two categories: those about Lesbians and those about single Black women making their way in the world. The deligthful opening tale is about young Johnnieruth, a spirited teenager, aware that she is different from everyone she knows. "I ain't met nobody yet that I'd really rather be with than be by myself. But I will someday..." By the end of the story, she discovers that women like her exist. We feel that, armed with this new information, Johnnieruth is about to set off on a delightful journey through life.

However, where Johnnieruth has a spirit of adventure, the Lesbians in the remaining stories seem to draw back slightly from life. They appear as if seen through a scrim hanging across the proscenium of a stage, signifying another reality. Birtha writes gentle stories about our daily lives: leave-takings, separations, and ex-lovers. Several stories repeat the theme of an unfulfilled relationship between a Black protagonist and a nebulous young white woman with nothing in particular to say and nothing special to offer.

Although the white women appear to be more aggressive in the relationships, an air of passivity hangs about their lives

The scenario in "Both Ways" and in "Ice Castle" goes like this: young white woman flirting, taking the initiative; tongue-tied shy, slightly older Black woman, unsure of herself in confident white woman's presence, responds to white woman and is jerked around. In these two stories and in "Her Ex-Lover," the Black protagonists are nearly immobilized in relation to the white women in their lives – women who are generally younger and certainly no more accomplished than the Black women, who hold the white women somewhat in awe. Yet, although the white women appear to be more aggressive in the relationships, an air of passivity hangs about their lives as well.

It was also difficult to relate to some of the stories because there is not much character development to hook onto. At times I felt I'd entered a private journal where the characteristics of the women are known only to the writer, therefore the story proceeds with a minimum of explanation to the reader. *Lovers' Choice* could have used a firmer editorial hand.

The strongest characters were Black women who were non-Lesbian (or at least not specifically stated to be Lesbian), concerned about issues other than relationships. I felt more in touch with the wry woman bus driver in "The Saints and Sinners Run," and with the loving, matter-of-fact mother taking her children on an all-night bus ride to keep them warm in "Route 23..." than with most of the Lesbians.

Birtha's strength in capturing these women lies in her beautiful rendering of their speech directly to our ear. She evokes the different forms of Black English without laying it on with a trowel. We hear the rhythm of northern urban lingo in "The Saints and Sinners Run,"

> ..I was pulling off over the South Street bridge when I caught a whiff of smoke. Don't nothing else in the world smell like that – I know it's got to be weed...I turn around... One of 'em, look like the ringleader, leaning way back in his seat... Mr. Kool himself.

Then we hear Leona Mae Moses, the transplanted southerner in "Route 23..."

> ...I ain't crazy yet, but I like to went crazy last night trying to think what I'm gonna do. I just kept thinking theys got to be some place in this great big city that I can carry these children to, where it's warm, where it stay warm, even in the middle of the night.

But Birtha's stories about strong, independent Black women who aren't specifically Lesbian resonate with optimistic energy.

Throughout the book, Birtha moves successfully through time taking us smoothly into the past and delivering us safely back to the present. And her colorful descriptions are often right on the mark.

> She loved giving readings – that was the one time when she felt completely visible. For all her colorfulness, for all her beads and bangles and bright batik prints, most of the time she felt that other people didn't see all of her. They saw only what mattered most to them at the time – her race, or her gender, or perhaps her age – and then didn't bother to look any further. It was only when she was on stage, standing up among a room full of attentive listeners, that she felt all her colors leap into focus.

Although *Lovers' Choice* has some problems, Birtha's is a thoughtful voice bringing us her honest message. There are many stories to be told about being a Black Lesbian in these times; however, I find it difficult to relate to the message Birtha brings us on the subject. I don't mean to invalidate her message by saying I feel glad that I don't know Lesbians – Black or white – like these. But Birtha's stories about strong, independent Black women who aren't specifically Lesbian resonate with optimistic energy, and they're worth the price of the book.

She is now working on a novel. I'll be glad to see it. We don't have enough Black Lesbians writing about our lives – however we see them. □ ★

BEYOND THE RAINBOW

Interview With National Campaign Worker Randy Miller

Randy Miller, who was the national Gay & Lesbian liaison with the Jackson campaign, now works for the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Campaign '88 as the Northeastern Regional Constituency Desk. His task is to get out the vote. In this capacity, he works with all the constituencies in nine New England states. He also works on the national level with the Gay and Lesbian community. The questions posed by NCBLG will be clear by Randy's answers.

Interview by Angela Bowen

I came into this position because when people were negotiating with Rev. Jackson to get him to speak at the March on Washington last October for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Gays mentioned to the Jackson staff that if they wanted to do Gay/Les Outreach, which they said they did, it would be wise for Jackson to bring on a Gay/Les coordinator with the Jackson campaign. After they came to the March, saw the number of people we had there and heard that we raised a surplus of $70,000, they decided that the Gay/Les constituencies would be one of their four targets. Of the three people who had negotiated with Jackson to speak at the March and to work out having a Gay/Les desk staffed, I was the one left in Washington, and the one who could take the risk of working until the money was raised to pay a salary. We also felt the position needed a person of color as a way to bring the Jackson message to the larger Gay/Les community. Following that, my coming to the DNC was negotiated by the Jackson campaign. Several of Jackson's staff were to be placed throughout all levels of the Dukakis campaign and the DNC. This is the level at which my constituency is being dealt with.

In the Jackson campaign, among the National staff, the environment was very good and people were very supportive. They had a high level of political sophistication, and it wasn't their first experience in working with openly Gay persons.

The reason I'm placed within DNC instead of the Dukakis campaign is financial, really. DNC can raise funds, and is raising $50 million to do outreach; the Dukakis campaign already has its money and by law can't raise any more.

Other Gay and Lesbian people work here, but not as paid staff. I'm recruiting volunteers to work with me to get out the Gay/Les vote.

I don't want people to think that Dukakis has changed his mind on specific things like the foster care issue (*in 1986, Dukakis helped push through a bill in the Mass. Legislature setting up a hierarchy with Gays and Lesbians at the bottom for becoming foster parents*), or signing the federal executive order banning discrimination in the federal government. He's not going to change on those things. The way I came on board and decided to help get out the vote is by doing a comparison on Dukakis and Bush. Any way you look at it we're better off with a Democrat in the White House. Dukakis' record is not fantastic in terms of Gay/Les issues, but there is a basic support for the Gay/Les Civil Rights Bill. He said he would sign it. There's also some other recognition of stuff around people with AIDS, like protecting them from discrimination—things that Republicans are just not sensitive to. I have no doubt that a Democrat in the White House will make all the difference in the world. Of course, even with the Democrats, people won't be able to put away their marching boots and their signs, it just means a different level of trust (than with a Republican).

How've I been treated? Well, in the Jackson campaign, among the National staff, the environment was very good and people were very supportive. They had a high level of political sophistication, and it wasn't their first experience in working with openly Gay persons; so if they were homophobic or had no empathy with the Gay/Les struggle, they kept it to themselves. Therefore, at that level it was fine. There were struggles, encounters, dialogue in relation to the importance that ought to be given to the Gay/Les vote. I was set to jump all over Walter Fauntroy as part of the Jackson campaign if I'd heard any equivalent of his penguin remark (*in 1983, Congressman Fauntroy equated Gay Rights to Penguin Rights*). Especially in D.C., he's got a lot of nerve making that kind of crack. There's high Gay votes here.

Within the Jackson campaign, the great majority of people were o.k. but there were problems with some of the clerical support staff, who had to be dealt with sometimes, but otherwise, the people were very warm and there was a sense that we were working on the same struggle. If there was any sense I had that we weren't being treated as fairly as we ought to be, it was in high level discussions where I felt the Gay and Lesbian leadership should have had more participation.

I've made it clear to staff that I'm an openly Gay person and won't take any garbage from anyone about that, and that I'm not going to hide my constituency.

In the Jackson campaign, no one ever told me not to rock the boat. There was the sense that we were all rocking the boat together, so we might as well all be rocking as hard as we could. The sky was the limit. Once you get to a certain level, you understand that there's

a higher struggle, that it doesn't end. Once you get to one level of acceptance, you say, now I want access to this level in the campaign. That's what happened in the Jackson campaign.

Within the DNC, it's much different. Although I've only been here a week and a half, there already feels like more of an atmosphere of not rocking the boat. Conventional political wisdom says you need to be careful about talking too much around Gay/Les issues. I've made it clear to staff that I'm an openly Gay person and won't take any garbage from anyone about that, and that I'm not going to hide my constituency. In that way, although it's still a struggle, I haven't had anyone come up and tell me that I need to tone it down. So far so good.

At The Convention:

People need to know that when we got to the Gay/Les caucus at the convention, 50% of Jackson's Gay/Les delegation turned out to be women. Overwhelmingly women and people of color were represented. I think most people will understand the significance of that, because in the Gay/Les community, when you talk about Gay/Les political leadership, it is so predominantly white and so unaware of issues of women and people of color. I would just guess that's the first time the Lesbian and Gay caucus has looked like that.

The level of discussion that happened was exciting also. People really felt they could speak their minds within the Jackson delegation. There was no talk of knuckling under. I was just very proud of that—because any time you get a chance to break the good old boys' system, especially in the Gay community, it's time to celebrate.

I was in the platform meeting, yes. And I wouldn't really say that it was a compromise agreement not to include the words Gay and Lesbian in the platform regarding hate crimes. People were very angry about that. What happened was that the Jackson folks were just outnumbered and outvoted. But to be fair, we weren't the only ones left out of the platform by name. The platform is very few pages, it's a general, bland and cautious platform. So because of that, it treats a lot of issues the way we got treated. But I think what made people angry was a kind of implied threat that if it even got brought up, it would unravel other compromises that got made. I've heard Barney Frank deny that that happened, but Barney Frank was not there in the platform committee meeting and I was sitting right there in the meeting. The Dukakis campaign needs to work on how that happened and make some reparations, I would expect, to the Gay community.

I would say that support for Dukakis among the people who worked on the Jackson campaign is 50/50. A lot of the people just realize they have to support the Democratic ticket and therefore must support Dukakis. Some other people are saying let's look at what he has said in terms of Gay and Lesbian issues and realize there's some basic points they can support him on. But then there's 50% still trying to decide on what they're going to do. And I'm urging them to support the ticket because I think there's a different discussion we need to have about dealing with the homophia that's been displayed in the Dukakis campaign and monitoring what kind of support they're giving the Gay/Les community. But that needs to be carried on separately from any consideration of what Bush and the Republican Party have offered to do, which is nothing at all for the Gay/Les community. So we need to understand and be politically sophisticated enough to know that Dukakis is not George Bush, in fact he's light years away, but in the place where Dukakis is, we need to debate with him around our issues. I hope that people will support Dukakis. I know it's hard to give up the hope that Jackson offered and vote for someone who does not offer that same level of opportunity.

I'm not as much in touch with other Black Gays and Lesbians around the country as when I was with the Jackson campaign. I just started here, really, but I will be talking very soon with Black Gay Leadership about coming on with this National Gay Advisory Council.

I would hope NCBLG would play the same role Black leaders played in the Jackson campaign; that they would come on board where they could and participate in the political process just because it advances Black leadership. Because we were there, we now have a say-so in whatever piece of the pie comes out after the election if Dukakis wins, and that's the role I hope people will play. I think the role that Black leadership played overall in the Jackson campaign was that they moved forward and took the agenda on when some of the white brothers and sisters were kind of shaky on whether they should support Jackson. Other Gay people of color stepped forward and said, well, we're going to support Jesse Jackson and we're going to call a meeting, and will you become involved in that? I don't want to exclude—there were some white folks who came out for Jackson very early. Pam David, for instance, was one who did a lot for the Les/Gay effort for Jackson across the country. I know, though, that it was a lot of the Black Gay/Les leadership that came forward and did a lot of the work to get a movement for Jesse off the ground in the Gay community.

My sense is that we're at the edge of something, of Black Gay and Lesbian leadership speaking out and becoming incredibly articulate about our issues because nobody else is.

I think an organization like NCBLG could be helpful in a large way to individuals like myself or to small groups of Black Lesbians and Gay men working or doing political action among heterosexuals. Mainly, you could help by doing something around support and around training to share the experiences that people have had in different places. We could share strategies for getting to know the powers that be and also pushing the Black Gay/Les agenda. I'd love to be in such a workshop. I think we're so fragmented and alienated in terms of knowing what's happening in Black Gay and Lesbian leadership that we don't come together enough to hear our stories and share the skills and contacts we have. And so one group of people runs out of steam, then someone else fresh and energetic comes along and when they start, it's like having to reinvent the wheel—having to put up with the same bigotry and prejudice and struggling, and getting just so far and then getting tired and sputtering out, then some more new blood coming along and starting from scratch all over again, because you know no one in the white community is going to say, "Well, you know so and so's already been here, and this is what they did."

All that I can pass along to Black Gays and Lesbians working in heterosexual communities where people aren't used to being exposed

(continued on page 16)

Spike Lee... (continued from page 12)

and then dumps her for her so-called infidelity. (Ironically, Jane is the light-skinned, golden-haired Homecoming Queen and leader of the Gamma's sister sorority). She whimpers off into the darkness and is not heard from again.

Half Pint gets into the frat. Dap takes up the messianic mantle and wakes everyone via the campus "liberty bell." Then he and Julien experience a miraculous brotherly reconciliation and unite to awaken all Black people. "Wake up!" Dap tells us. Wake up to what? I ask. Spike Lee needs to wake up to the fact that The Race includes women, some of whom are proud and happy to be lesbians, and gay men who feel the same about themselves. As long as our most powerful imagemakers maintain the myth that brotherhood and manhood require women to be props; as long as they maintain the myth that brotherhood and manhood require their own tender feelings for one another to be buried under a barrage of "faggot jokes," there can be no Uplift. □★★★★★

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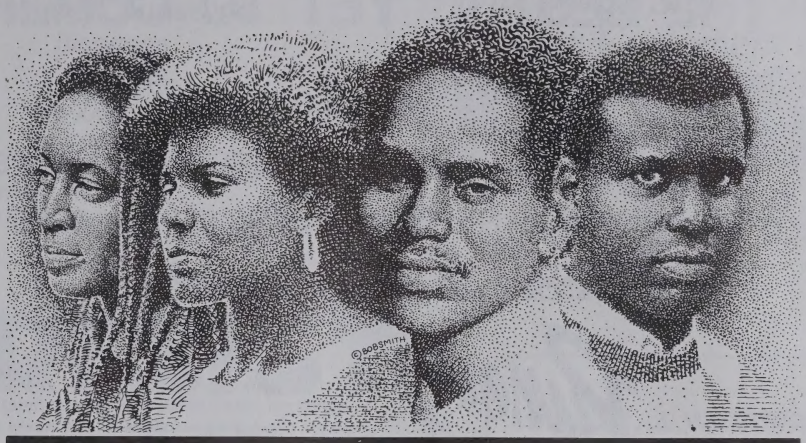
Randy Miller... *(continued from page 15)*

to out political Gays and Lesbians is to tell them what I have done, and it won't work everywhere. But here it is. In the realm of politics particularly, and especially if people are comfortable with who they are, they should begin to talk about the political strength of the Gay and Lesbian community. And begin a dialogue on that level, and stop worrying about whether people are going to accept you personally. That would be a wonderful, marvelous thing if they did, but the first thing people are going to respect in politics is that you can get votes out. And you don't have to get that many votes out for people to begin to open their eyes because it's precinct by precinct. So I'd say, just be yourself and assume that people are going to respect the power of your vote.

A Final Word

I think that in talking and working with the Jackson campaign, I've had a lot of questions about Black Gay leadership in not only the heterosexual Black community, but also in the white Gay community; and where we are, and why it seems that we are sometimes so silent. And my sense is that we're at the edge of something, of Black Gay and Lesbian leadership speaking out and becoming incredibly articulate about our issues because nobody else is. And I have high hopes for that movement that I see, really high hopes for the Black Gay and Lesbian community. I've heard people across the country when they've stood up for the Jackson campaign, when they've talked and organized, and showed what they're made of. Although we're an alienated and fragmented community and some of us are down for the count, some of us are also fighting back and becoming very visible and speaking to the needs that nobody else in this society speaks to. So I feel really good about that, and I take that feeling from the Jackson campaign, that we are a triumphant people. □



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NCBLG AWARDS

NCBLG granted awards at the Saturday night banquet October 1, 1988 at the Homecoming Conference.

The Mabel Hampton Award

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1988 to Bayard Rustin (posthumously) in recognition of their lifelong affirmation of Black pride and Lesbian/Gay pride.

The Melvin Boozer Memorial Award

1988 to Pat Norman in recognition of her leadership and political activism on behalf of Lesbian and Gay people.

Certificates of Recognition

1988 to founders of NCBLG:

Delores Berry
Darlene Garner
Jon Gee
Gil Gerald
Louis Hughes
Billy Jones
Renee McCoy

DCBLG (The Detroit Coalition) is jumping with activity – good fun and good work. A *partial* list of their recent doings:

July 9, 1st anniversary house party fundraiser; July 17, Outing at Bald Mountain ranch, horseback riding, looking at farm animals and visiting; August 16, a Rollerskating night; August 20, Picnic (Children welcome) with softball, guys vs. gals; August 16, Evening at Symphony (an outdoor event).

DCBLG'ers also do volunteer work for the PWA food bank and for the nat'l office of NCBLG, and publish a newsletter, "in the life."

CCBLG (The Chicago Coalition) held its annual boatride August 26th. Titled "Poetry in Motion," it was attended by a capacity crowd of 300. The boat left from Lake Point Towers at midnight, cruising Lake Michigan while guests enjoyed jazz, readings from "The Literary Exchange," and talks from Chicago co-chair Max Smith and NCBLG executive director Renee McCoy.

BCBLG (The Boston Coalition) is in an organizing mode, and expects to become a Chapter before the end of the year. They have held two meetings, both well attended by enthusiastic participants.

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Brother, Fighter, Survivor: James Dorsey

On August 19, 1987 James Dorsey, a nineteen year old Black Gay man from Detroit, Michigan entered the U.S. Job Corps. Soon after arriving at the program's Dayton, OH, residential center he was suddenly and without warning dismissed. The reason: he had tested HIV positive as a result of the Job Corps' policy of mandatory testing. James has filed suit against the Federal Government for discrimination. Soon after hearing about James's situation and discovering that he had been sent back home to Detroit, I contacted him and offered the support of NCBLG. Immediately he asked how he could help and said that the best thing NCBLG could do was to give him something to do. He has since become a regular visitor and volunteer at NCBLG's Detroit headquarter. In the following interview, James's answers are in response to questions not printed here.

Interview by Renee McCoy

I joined the Job Corps for a simple reason. There was lots going on with my family and I needed to live away from them for a while in order to keep my mind on school. See, I have been in thirteen different boys' homes and foster care homes. When I turned eighteen they released me and gave me money for independent living until I was nineteen. I stayed with different relatives until my lover helped me find an apartment. I was thinking that at nineteen I was going to have to find another way to live, since the money would end. I looked at some of the trade schools and the Job Corps seemed the best.

I determined I was gay at the age of eleven. Well, really before that. I knew I was Gay when I was four years old. I just fought it. But, when they put me in the boys' home for the first time was when I first had sex regularly with other boys. But, all my life I have been attracted to men. I find it easier to communicate with other men.

When I was seventeen I had my first real lover. I met a man named Chris at the bus stop. I thought I would be with him forever. He was my same age and I thought we could learn a lot from experimenting. We stayed together for three months. We broke off because he would not move with me and away from his mother.

Because I was a ward of the court, I received a regular check. I stayed with my sister and her family for a time and paid her rent. That didn't work because she did not want my Gay friends around. I stayed with my uncle then, but he wanted more than half my check and his girlfriend didn't want Gays around her kids. I was also trying to go to night school at the time, but I had to also help out at home and I was having a hard time learning in school.

I only went to the ninth grade. I didn't actually pass any of my grades. They just threw me from one class to another. My family had a lot of problems. We were moving around a lot. I just couldn't learn.

I didn't know anything about AIDS before the Job Corps. I was too busy worrying about my other problems. My father was using drugs and selling drugs to support us kids. My mother drank. I heard that AIDS was out there. I thought it would never happen to me because I didn't lay down with that many people. I tuned it out. I would see posters but I never understood them. I didn't know what reading was all about. I couldn't read and wasn't into reading.

When I first heard about AIDS, it was in a bar. I knew that you lose weight. I did not know anything about the symptoms. I thought you had to use drugs to get AIDS. I sort of knew the people I was laying down with. That's the way it is here. You usually know the person or their man or their girlfriends or something. You just never suspect that you could get AIDS from people you knew.

How did I feel when the Job Corps told me I was HIV positive?

Oh, Baby Girl! The doctor told me I was HIV positive and I asked "What is that?" He said it had something to do with AIDS. At that point I lost track of time. I just knew I was going to die.

I went to the mall with some of my friends. When I got back they told me to pack my bags. They said I had to leave right away and asked if I had a way to get back home. I said that I could call my lover to come get me. When I called him he had to work, so the Job Corps had to give me a ticket home. Within an hour they had me out of there.

They didn't talk to me about what it meant to have the virus. They just said I had it but it was not full blown. They said I should just be careful from now on. I did not have a place to go. I did not want my family to know I had the virus. A nurse helped me, but told me she wasn't supposed to. She had helped some other kids with the virus find a place to stay until they could get public assistance. She was a Black nurse. She gave me a list of places to check out for help. I heard she quit working there. She gave me five dollars to help, but she wasn't supposed to give me no money.

When I got back to Detroit, the hard part was facing my lover. I explained it to him that I could understand if he didn't want me no more. I asked him to take me to a boarding home until I could talk to my family about it. The first person I told in my family was my father. But he was sick himself. He told me to keep my head up high and be strong about it. He knew he was going to die, but he was being understanding about it. He died about a month after that. He gave me strength and hope. I thought everything was over until I looked at my mother and my little sister and knew I had to be strong and help her get out of where she was. My mother was living in a little house behind a large house. There was no heat or hot water there. So I just worked real hard to help my mother. I helped find a better place for them to live, get furniture, and heat, and helped my

(continued on page 26)

Perry Watkins: Rebel With A Cause

Former Army Sergeant Who Won Appeals Court Battle

* * Interview by Rex Wockner

U.S. Army Sergeant Perry Watkins was thrust into the gay/lesbian spotlight last February 10 when a federal appellate court in San Francisco ruled that discrimination against gays in the armed services wrongly "caters to private bias." The ruling—the first ever opposing military discrimination against gays—further defined gay men and lesbians as a "suspect class," like women, racial minorities, and aliens.

Gay activists immediately hailed the decision as "earth-shattering." Leonard Graff of National Gay Rights Advocates said, "The court said that there are constitutional protections for lesbians and gay men. The court rejected all the reasons offered by the Army to keep gays and lesbians out of the service."

Watkins had informed the Army he was gay when he enlisted in 1967, and several times thereafter. Despite being an "admitted homosexual," Watkins received consistently glowing evaluations from his superiors during his fifteen years of service. "One of our most respected and trusted soldiers," wrote his commanding officer.

For reasons unexplained, Watkins was nonetheless discharged in 1984 for being gay. The Army has appealed the recent ruling in Watkins' favor and the matter is expected to be reheard later this year.

The exact status of my case now is that the Ninth Circuit has agreed to rehear it with an eleven-judge panel rather than a three-judge panel. The earlier decision has been nullified, not reversed, just nullified. Once they agree to rehear a case, it's like the case has not been heard at all. So basically we're right back where we were when I was put out in 1984.

We ought to know the date of the rehearing by the beginning of October. Since the government is requesting the rehearing, it'll probably be expedited.

I have no idea whatsoever on the mindsets of those eleven people. I don't even try to speculate. It's not worth worrying about. All I can hope is that people will come in with the attitude to judge facts. It was a big problem for me my first three years out of the military being very, very concerned about what was going to happen. I worried a lot and wasn't motivated to do anything. Now at least with Rebel With A Cause foundation (a national speaking tour featuring Watkins), I've got my mind on other things.

Most important though is that because of the "suspect class" ruling, this is not just about me. It now affects every gay man and lesbian woman in the United States of America. It's much more than whether Perry Watkins gets retirement.

Yes, the people I worked with in the Army knew I was gay. [I'd even done some drag shows on base.] I don't know for a fact that people in the Pentagon were calling Fort Lewis, Washington, and ordering my commanding officer to do things. He told me so himself. He also told me he'd never go to court and admit that because it would end his career.

It was 1981 when I first went into court; I didn't get discharged until 1984. In '81 they wanted to revoke my security clearance because I was gay. It's interesting to note that they didn't decide that my being gay was important enough for me to be thrown out until I actually took them to court. As long as I was willing to sit back and let them revoke my clearance, it was alright for me to be gay and remain in the Army.

The security clearance was just a routine requirement for my job. If you tell someone that you're gay in 1967 and they don't draft you into the military until 1968, and they themselves repeatedly address the issue specifically of your being gay and put information in writing into your records that, yes, you are gay but it obviously is not detrimental, how can you possibly be a blackmail threat?

There was continuous, repeated information in my files. That's what was interesting about the revocation of my security clearance. It was the fourth time they had done this to me. The first three times they did it, I didn't say anything and then they would come back three months later and say, "Never mind, you can have it back. Since you're an admitted homosexual you're not a security risk." The Army made that determination themselves that I was suitable for military service.

Then, when they decided they wanted to put me out, their argument in court was, "Well, we have no idea how the man managed to avoid the system." It's absolutely ludicrous. In addition to not being happy with the military, I'm also not very happy with the judicial system that will look at the military and say it's my fault that I managed to be in there for fifteen years and the Army owes me nothing. That bothers me.

Of course I have them in a logical bind. That's why the courts are batting this back and forth. There's nothing to substantiate the claim that I can't function in the Army. The Army is the one that kept saying that I could.

Also, please remember, I requested discharge three times because I was gay and the Army said no every time. This was during the first six months I was in the service. Once, I gave them a statement admitting that I'd had sexual relationships. They investigated the statement for three months and then came back and said, "Well, we can't prove that this ever happened, so you have to stay in." Then, in 1984, they said, "Well, we have this statement that you gave us fifteen years ago. We're now going to say that it's true that you committed these acts and now you're gone." I find it abhorrent that our justice system lets this through.

Since 1984 (laughs) I filed bankruptcy. I lost my house. I worked for a while for the Social Security Administration for $5.77 an hour and decided that wasn't really what I wanted to do. Every time I applied for a mid-level management job, however, the first question out of their mouths was, "Well, gee, you're perfectly qualified for the position, but why didn't you stay in the Army five more years until you could have retired?"

Then I have to go through the whole thing of what happened and I never get called back.

What do I hope to accomplish with my Rebel With A Cause foundation? It makes me feel real good that we might be able to do something to improve life for everyone in America, but particularly for gays and

James Dorsey... *(continued from page 24)*

little sister get to school.

Right now, I'm staying with my ex-lover. We just broke up recently. I help out with the rent and phone bill. I have no skills, so I can't find a job. I get general assistance, but since I started this law suit, whenever the case is settled, they want their money back.

I want to go back to school to learn to read better. I had a tutor but she got kind of paranoid. I plan to get another one soon.

What I need is a roof over my head. I need someone to love me. I need some funds to help me along the way. I need to learn about my body so I can learn about the AIDS virus and help me work through it. I need someone to tell me how to have sex, how to not have sex. If I could read, I could probably do it myself, but that's my lowest skills.

What I would say to others who are HIV positive is, Keep your head up high. If you never thought about safe sex, think about it now. Think positive. Fight for your rights. Stand up for your rights. This is America. It's supposed to be the capitol of freedom. If we let them take our rights, they might as well take our lives.

And to the general public I say, Don't shy away from others because of a disease. Reach your hand out to the needy. □

****

On Sunday, August 28, 1988, James Dorsey celebrated his twentieth birth in the company of local NCBLG members at the national office and at a local bar. His story is much more involved than this interview, yet his story is not much different from that of many other young Black Gay men. □

Perry Watkins.... *(continued from page 25*

lesbians. That has, after all, been my life all along. I didn't know anything else. I was never in the closet. I don't know what it's really like to be in the closet. The gay and lesbian community has never deserted me. They've always accepted me as I am—bizarre and strange and with my quirks. But we as a community accept people like that. We are a wonderful group of people and we're getting the short end of the stick. Rebel With A Cause is out there trying to make that not happen anymore. □

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Women Of Color And Aids

By Lynell Johnson

In the early 1980's America was alerted to a new disease that was affecting gay men and I.V. drug abusers in the western and northeastern sections of the United States. Speculation abounded regarding what caused the disease and how it was transmitted. Since that time, scientific and social research has provided many answers. Various organizations and agencies mounted campaigns to educate members of the defined "risk groups" and the people serving them. The result was an increased sensitivity to the problems among these groups and a subsequent decrease in AIDS cases. While much attention was given to addressing the problem in these defined groups, the virus moved through other populations unchecked. Now, in the 7th year of the U.S. AIDS epidemic, we are beginning to hear about the issue of women of color and AIDS. It is not that women of color have only just begun to be affected by HIV – the AIDS virus has had a firm foothold in communities of color since the epidemic began; but only now is it receiving much needed and long overdue attention.

As early as 1983, reports began to acknowledge that minorities were disproportionately represented among U.S. AIDS cases. Public health officials stated that Black and Latino persons were at significantly higher risk for contracting the AIDS virus. Concurrent with the 1983 report, there remained little available information on the impact of AIDS on women in general and women of color specifically. It is now apparent that the relationship between eth nicity and incidence of AIDS is even more pronounced in women than in men. Fifty one percent of women with AIDS are Black and 21% are Latina. According to the Cen ters for Disease Control's (CDC) report of July 1988, there are 5956 diagnosed cases of AIDS in women in the U.S. Unfortunately, the CDC does not offer a racial breakdown of the general category of women. However, public health officials estimate that 85% of the women with AIDS are women of color. Therefore, one can infer that over 5000 of these are women of color. These statistics should serve to educate and motivate minority communities, as well as to offer a formidable challenge to agencies, organizations and individuals that address the health care needs of women of color. This level of motivation is necessary for action. However, the question of how and why HIV advanced to such a debilitating stage in women of color must also be addressed. The sad fact is, the continuing rise of AIDS among Black and Latina women is the result of factors that have plagued these groups over time, namely racism, sexism, and classism. In addition, the AIDS epidemic carries its own unique set of barriers, including shame and secrecy. Among the main barriers are that first, AIDS has been, and still continues to be (although less persistently as time passes), presented as a disease of gay, white males; second, inadequate and insensitive health care services are often the rule for minority women; and third, there is reluctance on the part of minority organizations to address the real impact of AIDS on minority communities at large and on minority women specifically.

The original "risk group" approach to explaining the AIDS epidemic has resulted in many women of color either considering themselves not at risk or being reluctant to inquire about their risk for HIV. Media coverage of the AIDS epidemic emphasized the effect of AIDS on the gay, white, male community. Coverage of individuals calling for a rapid and nationwide response to AIDS highlighted gay, white America, although Haitians and I.V. drug users were also mentioned for being at risk. The first information circulated to inform individuals of risk reduction spoke to gay white males, primarily because gay white males took it upon themselves to stand up for themselves, and rightly so. However, no attempt was made at cross-cultural education. Little, if any, sensitivity was shown toward the needs of ethnic minorities or women.

In response to governmental apathy regarding the high incidence of AIDS in their communities, white gay men began to organize to combat HIV transmission in their communities. However, because of a lack of information as well as economic and political restraints, this was not an option for women of color. Resultant of this dual concentration on HIV in gay, white males and concurrent denial of HIV incidence among women of color, the virus was allowed to essentially run rampant through our communities. This approach to public health, which reeks of racism, sexism, and classism, has been, and will continue to be, very costly to the public health system of the United States. The challenge now lies in assuring that the current rise in sensitivity to this community continues in a fair and all-inclusive fashion, such that all women have equal availability to life saving information. To meet this challenge, multiple solutions are necessary. First, sensitive, affordable health care is needed for minority women and their children. Public health agencies, both governmental and private facilities, need to encourage the development of culturally sensitive materials and services. They also must recommit themselves to addressing and correcting the existing disparities in the administration of public health services.

Inadequate preventative health care and education is an ongoing problem for women of color. We see the evidence in the disproportionate incidence of such medical problems as heart disease, sexually transmitted disease, unwanted pregnancies and nutrition related disorders. Oftentimes, diseases that affect the U.S. public have an exaggerated effect on minority women. Although the AIDS epidemic differs from past national health problems in many ways, it remains consistent in terms of its devastating effect on minority women. As a result of the racism and sexism inherent in our society, health care for Black and Latina women has traditionally been very difficult to access. There are few agencies offering health care services at affordable cost for low income women, many of whom are minority

women, and these agencies are generally underfunded, understaffed and not easily accessible. After woman power and funding is allotted for treatment, there is usually very little left over for preventative measures and education. In addition, agencies set up to provide the necessary education are often so bogged down with the overflow from direct service agencies that the ability to prepare and dispense educative materials and preventative supplies ranges from the difficult to the impossible. A majority of AIDS information being circulated is designed for specific middle and upper class populations and the few other individuals who can readily access the information designed for this target group. Very little information is designed for cross cultural or cross gender use, leaving women of color in a "catch 22" situation. Obviously, the solution is to design and circulate materials for specific populations. However, most community based clinics cannot afford to design community specific AIDS information, and federal monies have been previously unavailable to fund such efforts.

In addition to these less than adequate resources, there are other barriers which serve to hinder minority women access to health care. This is especially evident in relation to the AIDS epidemic and indicates that once again, it is the responsibility of people of color to organize and implement remedies by and for themselves.

The time has come for people of color to address the reality of HIV in their communities. This has been extremely difficult because traditional minority organizations have been hesitant to discuss issues such as homosexuality, drug abuse, and teen sexuality, except in a moralistic, condemnatory manner. It is virtually impossible to have a productive discussion on AIDS without addressing these issues in an open and educative fashion. As a result of homophobia in the church, for example, this traditional support we have come to expect from one another on issues that severely impact on us as people of color has been almost nonexistent in relation to the AIDS crisis. Persons seeking information or support have not been able to turn to the church for fear of exclusion from church, community, or family. In light of this, many people are extremely wary of approaching what should be a support base. This homophobia persists on the state and national level as well. Many national People of Color organizations have tended not to deal with the impact of AIDS on their communities simply because they were not willing to discuss sexuality openly and honestly. In believing (or purporting to believe) that AIDS is a white disease, they were also able to define homosexuality as a white phenomenon. This wishful thinking, this blind belief that homosexuality and/or bisexuality does not exist in their community has been costly to our precious communities of color. The price in human lives as well as physical and psychological health may never be truly realized.

This situation is currently being reversed. More and more organizations of People of Color are beginning to place AIDS education and prevention high on their agendas. More respected leaders of color are finally becoming involved. The church is reaching out to the community with its traditional support and the unwavering commitment for which it has been known. More people of color are opening up to honest discussion on AIDS and what it means in their communi ties. Once again people of color are mobilizing in an attempt to right the wrongs in their communities. Better late than never. AIDS, although a formidable foe, is not unbeatable. □

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OUR COMMON GROUND

As people of faith, we strive to assure that all those whose lives are affected by AIDS/HIV infection will receive compassionate non-judgemental respect, care, support, and assistance. AIDS is not divine punishment. God's merciful, loving, and empowering presence is with *all* affected by disease, including AIDS/HIV infection.

As people of faith, we commit ourselves to confront both the symptoms and causes of the AIDS/HIV-related *social* epidemic. The symptoms include our society's inadequate acknowledgement of the ravages of AIDS in ethnic and racial communities, the heterosexual community, women and children, the gay/lesbian community, and the Third World and in AIDS/HIV-related threats to civil liberties and violations of confidentiality. The causes of this AIDS/HIV-related social epidemic include racism, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, classism, and cultural and national imperialism.

The AIDS National Interfaith Network is a coalition of religious organizations and individuals organized to:

1. **Link people of faith . . . by developing and sustaining local, regional and national networks . . . ;**
2. **Mobilize religious leadership . . . by coordinating and expanding its advocacy role for responsible social policy . . . ;**
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5. **Promote . . . AIDS/HIV-related prevention education to all people, . . . which teaches the fundamental goodness of sexuality, supports responsible, caring, intimate relationships and respects the integrity of such relationships;**
6. **Promote . . . AIDS/HIV-related prevention education . . . in the context of comprehensive drug education programs;**
7. **Promote the provision of adequate services in the context of drug use, addictive behavior, and AIDS; and provide . . . empowerment for people living with AIDS, drug use and addictive behavior.**

Excerpts, *A Mission Statement*
April 1988

To learn more and to join ANIN, write or call:

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Conference Calls

Fifth International Les/Gay People of Color Conference

The Fifth International Lesbian and Gay People of Color Conference took place in Toronto, Canada July 28–July 31, 1988.

One hundred twenty-five Gays and Lesbians of color (and a handful of whites attended 22 workshops and caucuses focusing on: racism, class politics, AIDS, interracial relationships, etc.

Attendees came from Puerto Rico, Mexico, New Zealand, Britain, U.S., Germany and Canada. Workshops, panels and caucuses were a delightful international smorgasbord.

At the final plenary, a motion to form an ongoing steering committee was defeated. Instead, the conference participants voted to rotate leadership, passing along the decision-making to Lesbians and Gays in the next country hosting the conference.

Among other measures, the participants also voted to:

- begin each conference with a presentation on the nature of the Lesbian/Gay struggles within the country of the conference;
- raise the concerns and support the struggles of the indigenous peoples in whatever country the conference is held;
- use feminist principles and analyses to conduct the conference;
- make a vocal protest in our home communities on behalf of Simon Nkoli during his trial in September by coordinating actions on the day of his trial;
- protest to our local bookstores the lack of Black Gay & Lesbian books, specifically "In the Life" and "Home Girls."

An extensive document was unanimously approved declaring the lack of attention and money devoted to AIDS in the Black community to be an issue of racism and homophobia. The document supported PWA's and those working with them, and demanded that the government supply medicines and drugs not yet approved by the FDA.

The conference took place during Caribbana weekend, so parties and dances brought each workday to a close. The final plenary on Sunday culminated in a brunch and fashion show, with children singing and conference participants making merry in a show of African and Afro-American high fashion. The 1986 conference was held in Los Angeles. The next will be in England in 1990

—Angela Bowen

CDC And Its AIDS Conference

On August 15-17 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., several hundred people who had expressed concerns about AIDS and HIV infections in minority communities gathered to experience this Center for Disease (CDC) Conference. No doubt this CDC sponsored event was successful in bringing together various individuals and group representatives from peoples of color communities.

The conference agenda included a wide array of relevant AIDS data. Some of the presentations via lectures, seminars, major speakers, etc. "hit the mark". However, it was clear that most participants appreciated the oftentimes even more valuable interchange of details and data during times where one on one and/or small group sharing could occur. During most discussions one could see, hear and experience the diverse levels of knowledge from those who had almost no "hands on" to those who *only* had "hands on" experience with AIDS and HIV infection issues. The different levels of experience and personal/-group agendas made it extremely difficult for conference participants to be at the same or even a similar level of fully understanding, which would have given more of a sense of unity around grasping the underlining nature of the conference and its goals. At best, as with most recent gatherings of peoples of color in this type of environment, our creative agenda became networking and coalition building. We formed subgroups in which we shared information toward dealing with intervention in AIDS, HIV infection concerns. We also raised each other's level of consciousness around commitment to working with and for our peoples based on their needs and beyond the AIDS crisis, needs which are distinct to specific groups within our separate communities.

As usual, homophobia raised its ugly head time and time again; but many lesbians, gay men and supporters struggled against and won several battles associated with overt and subtle homophobia. The reports from the various caucuses attest to the need for dilligence in our efforts to combat anti-lesbian and gay hatred and violence in all form especially in a setting like this CDC event. Ma peoples of color expressed concerns by resisti attempts by the CDC administration and othe who desired "business as usual". The "old boy n work" concept was challenged again and agai Several small group caucuses and discussio centered around the dangers to our organizatio and to our communities when we accept gover ment grants without recognizing the potenti negative consequences, especially when gover ment funding sources are our primary ones. W noted this issue should be monitored constant if we are to avoid "business as usual" and still free to address the legitimate concerns of our pe ple and our community.

Many of us now understand that the CDC co ference and others like it offer Black and oth people of color opportunities to build and mo

fully develop our networks, thereby enabling us to create better support systems to sustain us through the long continuous battles ahead. We recognize that our struggles must not only include AIDS, HIV infections, but also the resistance to systematic attempts to kep us from becoming more cohesive and thus gaining a greater sense of the unity of our struggles. This CDC AIDS conference made it clear: our struggles continue.....

—James Credle

The Black Women's Cross Cultural Institute

A feeling of intense euphoria filled the room at the Shomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem on the morning of July 11 to mark the formal opening of the Second International Black Women's Cross Cultural Institute.

Women from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Colombia, Nicaragua and 21 other countries representing forty-seven organizations world wide filled a room rich with the pictorial history of African-American blues singers: a fitting context within which to deal with the politics of culture and its meaning in Black women's history. The theme of this Year's Institute: 'Women of the World Getting Out the Story: Our Lives, Our Truths' provided the lens through which women can envision and construct new images of ourselves and our social, political, and material lives.

The Institute attempted to correct some of the problems which had occurred at the first gathering in London during the summer of 1987. Co-convenors from Aotearoa (New Zealand), Zimbabwe and Great Britain, worked with the Institute Director and others to organize public forums, film and discussion series, a cross cultural art exhibit, poetry and oral history tellings, as well as newer art forms such as video poems. Before its closing ceremony more than 1000 people had participated in the Institute's activities.

In its brief two year history, the Institute has evinced a revolutionary dimension which could only have emerged from the context of Black woman's struggles in their own countries of origin, as well as those struggles at the very center of racist imperialism. At the same time, several challenges face us. Our ability to grapple with and find creative solutions through which we can envision, build and live an international movement constitutes one such challenge. What is the meaning of Black in an international context?

What do we mean by International? Clearly these answers must go beyond the question of representativeness and push us to think through the specifics of the condition of Black women which can only emerge from the *particular* historical and contemporary situations in which we live.

The ways in which we reconcile a growing schism about whether community activists or academics represent the authentic voice of the Black community challenges us as well. To hear this issue discussed at the Schomberg, an institution which came into existence because of the vision of Black people to research, retrieve and maintain all aspects of Black culture, was especially poignant for me. Embattled communities have been wary, and justifiably so, of an intelligentsia amongst their ranks who have sold out.

We should avoid the trap, however, of latching onto a kind of antiintellectualism which is in direct opposition to our struggle as colonized peoples to secure an education. Rather, we should be constructing models of education for empowerment and always asking ing the question *empowerment for what*.

Institute participants also grappled with the very meaning of culture itself: at times it was a product to be consumed or made exotic (dance, song); at others it was romanticized by those living apart from their cultures of origin. How we reconcile culture and politics remains a central question for future Institutes.

As an Afro-Caribbean lesbian feminist attending this international forum, I felt a familiar and intense urgency to take apart heterosexist assumptions. The essence of our sexuality has to be a part of the new images we construct about ourselves. Given the profound differences in cross cultural visibility of lesbian and gay struggles, discovering common ground among us is imperative. We must explore ways in which sexuality and lesbian and gay struggles are closely bound to struggles for national liberation; radical transformation of society cannot be achieved if one is allowed to dominate to the exclusion of the other.

The next meeting of the Black Women's Cross Cultural Institute will take place from July 17–August 5, 1989 in Zimbabwe.

—Jacqui Alexander

(more Conference Calls on page 50)

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Black Women And AIDS

By Ayofemi Stowe

It is important to separate the myths from the reality and to educate ourselves about AIDS. Many women still lack information about what HIV infection is, how AIDS is transmitted, and what individuals can do to prevent the spread of AIDS. Many lesbians feel they do not need to be concerned about AIDS because they are statistically at low risk for contracting the disease. Much of the black community still perceives AIDS as a white gay disease because of lack of information and poor communication within the community about AIDS. The lack of a clear national government policy on AIDS and the perception that AIDS affects "expendable" populations (gay men and intravenous drug users) reflects an intersection of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia that has disastrous implications for anyone not willing to either get education and information about this disease or to recognize the need for everyone to get involved in stopping the spread of AIDS.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is transmitted by a virus which can exist for up to nine years before causing full-blown symptoms of the disease. It is believed that available statistics widely underestimate the number of cases. To date, more than 66,000 cases have been documented in the United States since doctors began keeping records about the disease in 1981. These numbers do not include either persons with ARC (AIDS-related complex) or those who have tested positive for the HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) without displaying other symptoms.

Many of the individuals identified as having AIDS were initially gay males or intravenous drug users. The practice of labeling certain segments of the population as "high risk groups" has focused attention away from the fact that high risk behavior by any individual can expose them to this virus. Discrimination and misinformation on the public policy level also contribute to individual confusion around AIDS. For example, the current ballot initiatives in California, propositions 96 and 102, claim to offer solutions to problems related to the AIDS crisis. Many of the provisions of these initiatives have already been enacted by the state legislature, although the California Medical Association and other health care organizations srongly oppose these measures because they are both medically misleading and could ultimately be counterproductive in stopping the spread of AIDS.

Women and children represent an emerging population of HIV-infected persons. In addition to the discrimination in employment, housing, and access to medical treatment that all people with AIDS must face, the experience of women with AIDS is compounded by the economic, social, and gender oppression of women in this society.

More than 5,000 women (7.9% of the total) have AIDS. However, in 1986, 20% of all new AIDS cases were women. From 50% to 75% of the women with AIDS in the United States have already died. AIDS became the leading cause of death nationally for women, age 25 to 34, as of July 1, 1987. 84% of this group are women of color. Nationally, the virus was transmitted to more than 50% of the women through intravenous drug use, 29% through heterosexual contact, and 11.5% through blood transfusions.

AIDS is the leading cause of death among women, ages 20-29, in New York City. In the state of New Jersey, women with AIDS account for about 20% of all reported cases. In Los Angeles County, from 34% to 50% of the women with AIDS became infected through heterosexual contact and 19% became infected through intravenous drug use.

According to government statistics cited in a September, 1988 report on AIDS in *Ebony Magazine*, 25% of all reported AIDS cases in this country have been diagnosed in blacks, although blacks are only 12% of the total population. According to the same article, 52% of all women infected with AIDS are black, 61% of all babies born with AIDS are black, and every two hours a black person dies of AIDS.

Five major means of transmission have been identified:

1. Having sexual contact with (the blood, semen, vaginal secretions, urine, or feces of) a person infected with HIV.
2. Sharing (blood in) intravenous (I.V.) needles with someone infected with the AIDS virus.
3. Receiving blood transfusions or blood products from someone infected with the AIDS virus.
4. Using sperm from an infected donor for artificial insemination.
5. As a baby, being born to a woman infected with the AIDS virus.

While many persons who are infected test positive without external symptoms, there are some symptoms associated with the disease which have been identified. Initially, when the immune system has been only partially damaged by HIV, certain symptoms which have been labeled AIDS-related Complex (ARC) may occur. These symptoms include swollen lymph glands, severe fatigue, rapid weight loss, diarrhea, night sweats, fevers, chills, and infections.

Certain infections (called opportunistic infections) in addition to the symptoms associated with ARC are usually present when the case is labeled AIDS. These include a lung infection called pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP), often indicated by a dry cough or shortness of breath, or purplish lumps on the skin caused by a cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma (KS).

The AIDS virus is actually very fragile, despite its ability to live for long periods of time. It has been demonstrated that common household bleach or the spermicide nonoxynol-9 used in contraceptive foams, jellies, and creams can kill it. Its transmission sexually is usually prevented by the use of a condom or other latex barrier. By not allowing unprotected sexual activity, not having multiple sexual partners, or not ever sharing I.V. drug needles, an individual can greatly reduce the risk of becoming infected. Despite prevalent mythology, there is no evidence that AIDS is transmitted by casual contact such as sharing cups or eating utensils, using public toilets, etc.

Several factors contribute to both the high rate of HIV infection and the high number of deaths because of AIDS among women, blacks, and black women in particular. The opportunistic infections in women are often gynecological. Both swollen lymph glands

(continued on page 37)

GAY MEN: GETTING OUR AIDS "HOMEWORK" DONE

by Al Cunningham

Two recent scenarios that took place within the gay Black male community help illustrate some of the AIDS-related issues being confronted by our disproportionately affected community:

In the first scenario, Washington, D.C.'s Black gay community, known for being well-educated, sophisticated and upwardly mobile, was confronting two disturbing facts: 1. The incidence of AIDS in Washington among Black gay men was increasing at more than twice the rate of white gay men. 2. Washington alone, among other major American cities, including Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, had no well-financed, established minority-based AIDS education and service organization.

The issue came to a head when Washington's Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. Reed Tuckson, complained at the regular meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on AIDS that he "could not find Black gay leaders" with whom to discuss AIDS-related issues. The owner of a local club frequented by Black gay men, Aundrea Scott, was a guest at the Advisory Committee meeting and volunteered to assist Tuckson in setting up a meeting with representatives of Black gay organizations.

During the six weeks that followed, all manner of political infighting ensued within the Black gay community. Early on it was determined that the community should present Tuckson with a well-organized, united front around a set of agreed upon issues and requests for action. To accomplish this, strategy meetings were called involving the spectrum of organizational representatives, as well as individuals from the community as a whole. Long-standing antagonisms flared afresh, new feuds were initiated and the ever-present ego battles continued unabated. Issues and solid ideas for action by the D.C. Commission of Public Health were not nearly so plentiful, though they slowly began to take shape. (It is important to note that Black lesbians had been included from the outset in these meetings, though they were peripheral to the in-fighting and in fact were often among the few voices of reason.)

Finally, two weeks before the meeting between gay Blacks and Dr. Tuckson, came the galvanizaing blow. A columnist for the Washington Post wrote a scathing article titled "Black Gays Evade Reality." In it, he blamed the Washington gay Black community for everything from an alleged lack of gay representation at the Centers for Disease Control's national minority AIDS conference to rampant homophobia in the Washington Black community at large. At last there was an issue around which everyone could rally on the same side! Individual differences over degree of activism and priorities were laid aside long enough to recongize the need to come together, repudiate this misinformed attack and set about impacting the epidemic's rising toll.

An overflow crowd appeared at the meeting with Public Health Commissioner Reed Tuckson to share a room that lacked adequate air conditioning and almost immediately become stifling. Nevertheless, tempers remained cool and adversarial relationships stayed on the back burner in the interest of the greater good. Issues and recommended actions were presented and received with interest, and in some instances the Commissioner agreed upon immediate action or delegated responsibility to a member of his staff. While not enough time to witness the fruits of this effort has elapsed, it is more important that a Black lesbian and gay male coalition has been formed which will continue to coordinate efforts around the AIDS crisis and other issues of importance in Washington.

The second scenario involves a group of 15 gay Black men from around the country who recently met in Washington to discuss issues surrounding AIDS in the gay Black community. These men all work in AIDS-related organizations, but their perspectives around the issues differed with their individual roles and geographic locations.

The meeting was designed to provide a forum for the discussion of concerns deemed significant by those present and also to offer an opportunity for mutual problem-solving and supportiveness. Among the needs and issues which surfaced were:

-Money for programs
-Involvement of the greater Black community
-Culturally sensitive AIDS education and prevention messages
-Greater utilization of existing services
-Networking among gay Black groups and individuals
-Technical assistance to groups getting started
-Outreach to street people, IV drug users, cross dressers
-Literacy issues as they relate to AIDS education
-Fostering Black gay community cohesiveness
-Resistance of gay bars to AIDS-related literature and activities
-Reaching bisexuals, "closeted"gays, the Black gay "establishment"
-Overcoming homophobia in the Black community
-Religion and AIDS

Some important insights came out of the discussion of these needs and issues. One is the fact that, unlike the white gay community, gay Black people do not tend to leave their home base and move to cities or communities where there is a preponderence of gay people. Rather, whether they leave a small town setting for an urban environment or are born in a large city, they generally establish themselves within the greater Black community. Thus, to impact the gay Black community with AIDS prevention, education and support information, one must impact the Black community as a whole.

Another significant insight relates to engaging religious communities in AIDS-related activites. It was acknowledged that Black clergypeople often remain intransigent on the issue of AIDS, but it was pointed out that "the pews often lead the pulpit" on matters of church policy. It is important therefore to seek out individuals who are sympathetic to the crisis of AIDS in the Black community and enlist their support to obtain church involvement.

Fostering a greater sense of gay Black"community" and cohesiveness within that community to be aware of and fight AIDS is a task requiring a great deal of work, in large part because of the cultural diversity that becomes evident upon even superficial examination. We must seek each other wherever we may be found, including football games, gospel shows, clubs, festivals, etc., and share AIDS messages within those varying contexts. We must find Afrocentric

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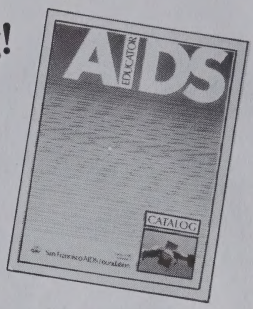

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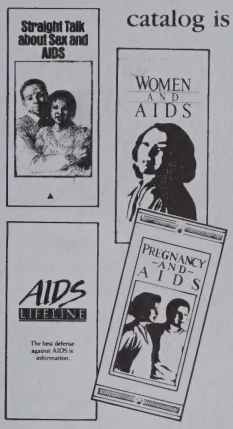
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means by which we can create a sense of community, as opposed to imitating white gay organizing models. Those of us who are more open and activist must be willing to acknowledge and respect those of our brethren whose consciousness is at a different level and appeal to them "where they are," without condemnation.

The men in this second group pledged their support to one another within whichever AIDS-related area they felt most comforable or knowledgeable. More important, they offered one another, without exception, the invaluable support of a compassionate ear and an understanding heart. Never again need any one of them feel isolated and alone in the struggle.

What both these scenarios suggest is that the scourge of AIDS may offer a rare opportunity to gay Black men, the gay Black "community" in general and the Black community as a whole. It is going to force us either to finally confront and deal with issues of sexuality and community we have heretofore denied or ignored, or face the consequences of a population ravaged if not decimated by this disease. Gay Black men are integral threads in the fabric that is the Black community. More and more, in larger and larger numbers, we are coming together, working together and asserting ourselves for the health and wholeness of all Black people.□

CONDITIONS

VII

O tell me, Brutus,
with corpses decomposing
in the river,
loved ones keeping fevers
quiet in city hospitals,
the backrooms locked and chained,
the police with new power to seize
and search our hearts, our kisses,
our mutual consents around midnight.

O tell me, Brutus,
what are we to do
with all this leather,
all these whips and chains?

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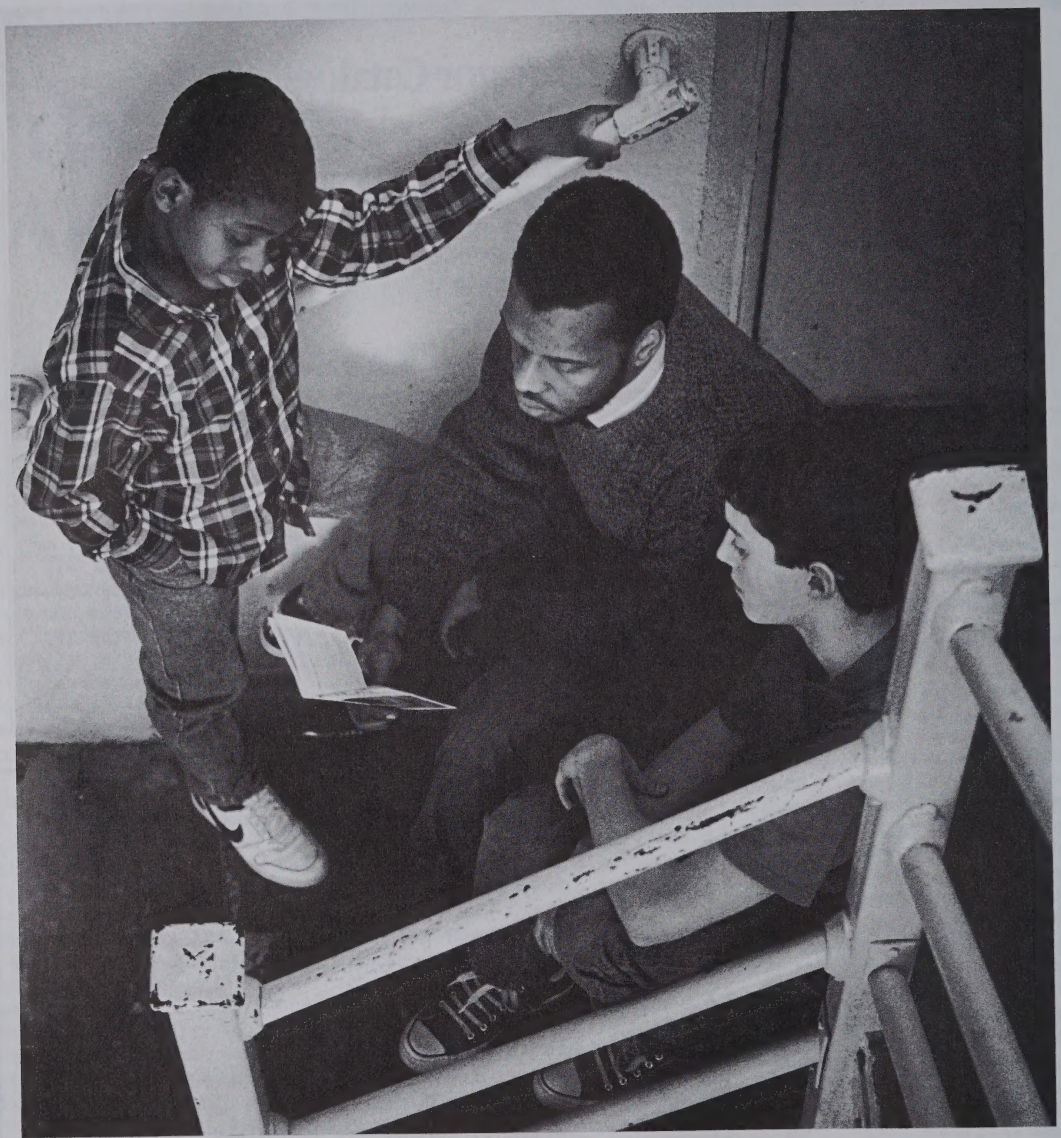

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and KS may not appear as symptoms in women, delaying accurate diagnosis. Being under stress, having a nutritionally inadequate diet, or using substances such as drugs or alcohol make the body less resistant to invasion by HIV. Also, because of the intersection of this health crisis with existing economic and social factors (such as racism and sexism), these groups have traditionally had poorer access to health care or have histories of health problems before diagnosis with AIDS. As primary care givers to men and children, women traditionally delay seeking help for themselves, even when symptoms appear.

For heterosexual women, their partner's exposure to the virus may put them at risk for several reasons:

1. the partner may refuse to wear a condom
2. the partner may not be honest about non-monogamous relationships or bisexuality
3. the partner may be at risk due to I.V. drug use

Many "safe sex" guidelines for heterosexual behavior place most of the responsibility on the woman, repeating the societal pattern that has made women primarily responsible for contraception. This assumption ignores the potential consequences of violence that the woman may be subjected to for requesting safe sex practices.

Many lesbians assume that they are not at risk for HIV infection. Sexual activity with a man in the past (or such activity by a lesbian or bisexual partner), I.V. drug usage, or any exchange of blood products (including menstrual blood) may permit transmission of the virus.

Present research indicates that most persons testing HIV positive will eventually display the symptoms of AIDS. There is an antibody test, which can identify fairly reliably whether an individual is infected with the AIDS virus. Confidentiality of the test result is crucial. Without this protection, many people will not use this source of important information which could help to reduce the spread of AIDS. Also, lack of confidentiality can promote the discrimination against persons with AIDS. For example, many insurance companies have denied medical coverage simply on the basis of a positive test result.

It is essential to eliminate the mythology and get accurate information about how AIDS is transmitted. It is important that each of us contributes to the process of stopping the spread of AIDS, from honesty about our sexual histories to practicing safe sex, from individual testing to lobbying for medical treatment for persons with AIDS. Beyond that individual level of consciousness, we must recognize the critical impact of sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia on our communities, both in the lack of a national AIDS policy from the federal government and lack of appropriate funding for research and education. We cannot put our heads in the sand and ignore this health crisis: our lives depend on us! □

AIDS PROJECT NEW HAVEN

is Connecticut's first and largest AIDS service organization.
A variety of services are free to those who need assistance during the AIDS epidemic, including
□ "buddies", companions and friends to people with AIDS or ARC (AIDS related complex)
□ an information, referral and counseling hotline.
□ a speaker's bureau consisting of people who have the most recent AIDS information.
□ a daily meals delivery program for people with AIDS.
□ an outreach program in the drug shooting galleries, soup kitchens, and streets to reach IV drug users, prostitutes and homeless people.

203-624-AIDS

If you would like to volunteer or have other questions, call the administrative office during business hours: 203-624-0947.

REMEMBER

AIDS does not discriminate.
AIDS is preventable.
Know how to protect yourself.

INITIATION

for Donald

Now that i have
sat up with death
held its hand rocked it
grieved to its giggle
mocking me to stones
too big to pass alone

Now that i have
mourned the passing of
men loves never had
acts un-acted
perversion polited pubescantly

Now that i have
shed shades of nigger boy
for pigments of faggot queer
gender blender blur

Now that i am
fairy freaky free
initiate me

Paint wars on my cheeks
anoint me with coco oil and cum
so i speak in tongues twisted
so tight they untangle my mind

Hold my head in hand
slice it bless it
leave a cross on its tip

Mark of the rite
initiation to the fight

R. Timothy Jackson

When your odds of getting AIDS are three times greater, you don't take chances...not even once.

All it takes is one time, with one infected sex partner.

Or a single fix, sharing needles or even cookers, water or cotton with an infected drug partner.

And, you can't always tell who's infected. Some people who don't look or feel sick can still pass the AIDS virus to others. Blacks are being infected at a rate *three times* greater than whites.

Don't risk it, even once. Have safer sex and use condoms. Don't shoot drugs or share paraphernalia. And don't drink too much alcohol because then, you're more likely to take the risk.

With odds like these, we can't take a single chance.

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Linea De Información Sobre El SIDA Del Distrito De Columbia: 328-0697

V/T.D.D.

Medical Update

According to the Centers for Disease Control, (CDC), "The disproportionate number of cases among Blacks and Hispanics underscores the urgent need for a rapid response to prevent HIV infection and AIDS in minority communities." Consider that Blacks constitute only 12% of the U.S. population. Then compare our rate for AIDS with that of the majority population. Cumulative numbers through August 29, 1988 show:

	Whites	Blacks
Homosexual/Bisexual Male	32,546	6,910
Intravenous (IV) Drug Abuser	2,669	6,937
Homosexual Male and IV Drug Abuser	3,129	1,289
Hemophiliac/Coagulation Disorder	572	42
Heterosexual Cases	558	1976
Transfusion, Blood/Components	1,320	277
Undertermined	859	869

Among all ethnic groups, the age group with the highest percentage of AIDS diagnosis are 30-39 year olds.

CDC allocated $30,955,000 to target minority communities for AIDS activities in 1988 out of a total budget of $304,942,000. All minorities will share this budget. For fiscal year 1989, CDC has requested 4000,719,000 from the government, with 35,472,000 earmarked for minority prevention. Blacks and Hispanics together make up only 20% of the population, but as of August 14, 1988 they constituted:

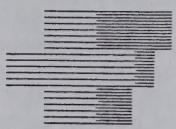
- 39% of all AIDS cases
- 37% of all AIDS cases among men
- 71% of all AIDS cases among women
- 76% of all AIDS cases among infants and children
- 80% of all AIDS cases among drug users (without exposure)
- 81% of all AIDS cases among heterosexuals (without drug use)

In Boston on September 6, 1988 a new Outpatient Treatment Center opened, the first free-standing outpatient treatment center for HIV injected individuals. Fenway Community Health Center (FCHC) was also the first health facility in Boston to offer aerosolized pentamadine treatments, a drug therapy used to prevent Pneumocystis Carnii Pneumonia (PCP), a common lung infection in patients with AIDS. The clinic will serve as a demonstration model for the out-of hospital provision of medical services to people with AIDS and HIV infection.

CONGRATULATIONS

ON A

SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE!



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SINCE 1971

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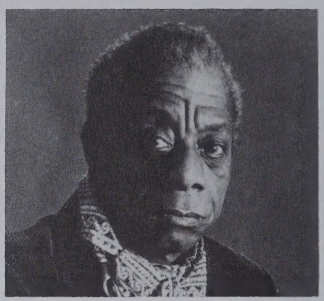

We Must Always Bury Our Dead Twice

By Barbara Smith

When I was growing up in Cleveland in the 1950s and early '60s, there were two things I wanted, above all. One was to escape the bounds of that big midwestern city, to see wondrous places, especially New York and Paris. The other was to write.

I loved James Baldwin, not only because he made me want to shape prose with a clarity and fire that gave it the power to make people change, but because his life showed me a way out.

Of all the books that I devoured during those years, it was James Baldwin's that most inspired my dreams. Fortunately, the first work I read by him was *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, which, like all the Black literature my sister and I had the opportunity to read in those pre-Black Studies days, was brought home to us from the library by our Aunt LaRue. The book astounded me. For the first time I encountered somebody in fiction whose life was very much like my own, as opposed to being the polar opposite. The novel offered me the rarest gift, the gift of possibility. If John Grimes, growing up poor and Black in Harlem in the 1930s, who was as much of an outsider as I had ever been, could be a writer, then maybe so could I.

I loved James Baldwin, not only because he made me want to shape prose with a clarity and fire that gave it the power to make people change, but because his life showed me a way out. Simply beause he existed, I might not have to go to a state school, get a good job working for a utility company, become a wife, keep on going to church, and always stay in Cleveland. I did not acknowledge that I had Lesbian feelings until I was in my twenties, but long before that, Baldwin's homosexuality was also a hopeful sign. If nothing else, it indicated his capacity to radically non-conform, to carve out his own emotional freedom, lessons that I myself would need to learn.

When I heard that he had died, just a few weeks after a death in my own family, I knew yet again how important this man had been to me. And I felt extremely lonely; someone whom I only knew through his writing, but who had been a guide to me, was no longer here.

Last Tuesday, completely exhausted from a long weekend away at a National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays board meeting, I decided to get up before dawn and take a train from Albany to New York so I could attend his funeral. It is his funeral that I want to focus on here, to try to convey the transcendence this public observance of James Baldwin's life brought to those of us who experienced it, and to speak also of the disappointment this same ceremony brought to those of us who are out and politically active as Black Lesbians and Gay men.

The funeral began at noon at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The cathedral sits, as if transported from another continent and century, between 110th and 112th and Amsterdam Avenue, at the edge of Harlem, where Baldwin was born. It is the largest gothic cathedral in the world, and for those who have seen it, the magnitude of the day's events might well be grasped from simply knowing the scale of the building in which they occurred. The last funeral to be held here was Duke Ellington's in 1974.

At first, I sat alone, but soon joined a Black Lesbian artist I'd met when I lived in New York and a friend of hers, a Black woman writer. A Black Gay friend, who had also made the trip down from Albany, happened to see me and came to sit with us. Our group was typical of those that filled the cathedral beyond capacity until there was standing room only. The vast majority of the two or three thousand people who came to honor Baldwin were Black and hundreds of us were also Lesbian and Gay.

The very long processional began at the front of the cathedral, came up the right hand aisle and then went down the center, accompanied by Master Babatunde Olatunji's drummers. Their sound alerted us that this "Celebration of the Life of James Arthur Baldwin" was to be a uniquely fitting mixture of African, African American, and Anglican spiritual and cultural traditions. Following the priests and choir came a mass of Black writers and other artists, many of whom served as honorary pall bearers and many of whom were women, including Toni Cade Bambara, Paule Marshall, and Sonia Sanchez.

I felt the service begin when Odetta walked toward the microphone singing "Kumbaya," which she invited us to sing with her.

I had always heard about Baldwin's huge family, but to see the scores of them to-

(continued on page 42)

Baldwin.....

Not A Bad Legacy, Brother

By Joseph Beam

Many years ago, while rummaging through cartons in our basement, I found a tattered, coverless copy of James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room.* It had probably been left behind by one of the roomers with whom we shared our house. I read it, and realized that Joey and David's experience reflected what I felt. I lay among those sweaty, tangled sheets with them. I knew, even at 11, that it was boys and men to whom I was sexually attracted but didn't quite understand what that meant. But those feelings, of both terror and anticipation, informed the earliest of my childhood friendships. The specifics of *Giovanni's Room*—the white main characters, the strange locales of New York and Paris, and, even, Baldwin's Blackness and gayness—seemed incidental. The novel sent deep resonances through me. Even then, though, I wondered, could there be happy endings in this kind of love?

Years and circumstances intervened before I returned to Baldwin's work. A white prep school, a predominantly white college experience, and my increased interest in the Black civil rights movement made Baldwin essential reading. After all, it was his voice, angry and eloquent, and the voices—and deaths—of other Black people that made my attendance at Malvern Prep, an exclusive high school, a possibility. It was his words and the machinations of other civil rights activists that forced my nondescript Baptist college in Indiana, in the early '70s, to fund the Black Student Union and offer Black Studies courses. I was as amazed then as I am now how some white people could be so right, while others were so wrong. I wondered why white students petitioned against Black Awareness Weekend, specifically the appearances of Gwendolyn Brooks and Julian Bond. What tremors did they create in the white knees? I remember turning to *A Rap on Race*, a dialogue between anthropologist Margaret Mead and Baldwin, for answers. Mead had always impressed me as a humane individual who was interested, quite admirably, in the culture and traditions of people of color around the globe. Perhaps these two surveyors of the human psyche and condition might cast some light on the madness of my campus and how the notion of whiteness made so many students so willfully ignorant.

Yet, as I look back on Baldwin's writing, I admire most his wisdom and courage in dealing sensitively with male relationships and the richness with which he drew Black culture. The racial landscape has been the primary domain of Black male writers. Amiri Baraka (a.k.a LeRoi Jones) went directly to the bank saying terrible things about white people, a rhetorician who gives us that akimbo warrior stance and a slogan to wail. But then again, there are writers who offer concepts to ponder. Baldwin was a writer who wrote with the delicacy we've come to expect from women writers; yet, at times his male characters could be as misogynist and despicable as those portrayed by other male writers.

I would have wished Baldwin to have been pro-feminist. In a dialogue with Black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde, which appeared several years ago in *Essence*, he spoke with less surety than Lorde about the mission of Black writers. Lorde very clearly saw other Black women as her audience and issues of concern to Black wommen as her primary subject matter. She pressed Baldwin: What do you have to say about the sexual violence of Black men *in* the Black community? Shouldn't you be talking about that? What are you saying to my son Jonathan?

The crisis in Black male fiction, its lack of emotion and possibility, results from focusing on the racist foot on our necks. But life goes on. How do we interact positively with each other in our communities? The most glorious thing about Zora Neale Hurston's *Our Eyes Were Watching God* is the absence of white people. Indeed, we have our own country, which Baldwin so well described in his fiction.

In* Just Above My Head, *in plain view of the Black family, it was possible for two Black men to be lovers, and be political, and be cherished for who they were.

Just Above My Head, Baldwin's last novel, published in 1979, catapulted Black male fiction light years. Heretofore, Black male writers suffered from a kind of "na tionalistic heterosexism." Homophobia al ways limited the depths to which we could relate, reducing us to stereotypes speaking slang and aphorisms. In *Just Above My Head*, in plain view of the Black family, it was possible for two Black men to be lovers, and be political, and be cherished for who they were. Baldwin had crossed this treach erous terrain decades before. Because he could envision us as lovers, our possibilities were endless. We could be warriors, artists, and astronauts; we could be severe, sensitive and philosophical.

The first and only time I heard James Baldwin read, I sat perched on the edge of my chair catching every syllable that dropped from his lips. In the too-crowded, too-

(continued on page 47)

gether, led by his mother in a wheelchair, struck a visceral emotional chord. They marched like a tribe, like the joining of many tribes in their great diversity, and they looked like everybody's Black family, including my own, in mourning.

It was of course the Black aspects of the funeral inside of the Episcopal cathedral that transported us. Although the Order of Service lists anthems, prayers, and scriptures, I felt the service begin when Odetta walked toward the microphone singing "Kumbaya," which she invited us to sing with her. She then sang three traditional Black songs, a capella: "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, When I Lay My Burden Down," and "Let us Break Bread Together on Our Knees." This is the music that we were raised on, just as Baldwin was. The spirit of this music as well as the spoken cadences of the Black church infused his writing and were essential to its power.

Maya Angelou's ecomium/tribute set the tone for all that followed because she spoke so passionately, personally, and Blackly about her love for Baldwin. She said that it's easy for a woman to find a lover, that she could stand on any street corner or even sit in any church pew and do that, but that brothers were much harder to come by. Spontaneously, many of us clapped for her words, while wondering if we *should* be clapping at a funeral in an Anglican cathedral. By this time, however, St. John the Divine was no longer a mere cathedral. It had become a gospel church, like the ones Baldwin grew up in and like the Temple of the Fire Baptized, which he immortalized in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. A church where spirit, pain, and joy formed a holy amalgam and were righteously acknowledged *out loud*.

Toni Morrison gave the second tribute in quite different, but no less vivid, language. She spoke about how uniquely gentle and kind Baldwin was and said his was a "tenderness and vulnerability that asked everything of us; expected everything of us...." For the first time that afternoon I began to think specifically about Baldwin as a Gay man and wondered if this "detail" of his being would surface here.

The three tributes, including one by the French Ambassador to the U.S., were followed by "A Horn Salute" which was in fact a jazz arrangement played by Hugh Masekela on trumpet, Jimmy Owens on flugel horn, and Danny Mixon on piano. Again, the music embodied the spirit of the life being honored and also reflected another facet of the sound of Baldwin's writing. At one point, the trio segued into a subtle jazz version of "When the Saints Go Marching In," an aural gift recognizable to those of us whose culture this music was.

Amiri Baraka's eulogy, entitled "Jimmy," went to the heart of Baldwin as a person and as an artist. By delivering his own relentless political message in Baldwin's memory Baraka reflected and shared the activism that characterized Baldwin's true greatness as a writer. Thousands of Black people had come to commemorate Baldwin's life not just because of his remarkable literary gifts, but because, until the end, he consistently wrote about us. Unlike some writers, who the white establishment loves much more, Baldwin's constant themes were racism, oppression, and injustice, all of which are integrally linked to every nuance of Black people's personal and emotional lives. It is not possible to write accurately about how African Americans feel without also writing about the social, political, and economic context in which those feelings and individual dramas take place.

Baraka reminded us that like all great artists, Baldwin had an ethical vision. He knew that his job was to deal in "both beauty *and* truth":

> When we saw and heard him, he made us feel good. He made us feel, for one thing, that we could defend ourselves, that we were in the world not merely as animate slaves, but as terrifyingly sensitive measures of what is good or evil, beautiful or ugly. This is the power of his spirit. This is the bond which created our love for him. This is the fire that terrifies our pitiful enemies. That not only are we alive but shatteringly precise in our songs and our scorn. You could not possibly think yourself righteous murderers, when you saw or were wrenched by our Jimmy's spirit! He was carrying it as us, as we carry him as us.
>
> Jimmy will be remembered, even as James, for his *word*. Only the completely ignorant can doubt his mastery of it. Jimmy Baldwin was the creator of contemporary American speech even before Americans could dig that. He created it so we could speak to each other at unimaginable intensities of feeling, so we could make sense to each other at yet higher and higher tempos.

Baraka also referred to the "pre-humans" who have plagued this country's history at every turn with their vicious and violent responses to all who are not exactly like themselves. I especially appreciated, as did many others, his condemnation of the ignorant and often cruel comments about Baldwin's career in the white press upon his death. (The most pathetic example of these literary lynchings I have come across was Peter S. Prescott's in the December 14 issue of *Newsweek*.)

Baraka concluded by stating: "For Jimmy was God's black revolutionary mouth; if there is a God, and revolution his righteous natural expression and elegant song the deepest and most fundamental commonplace of being alive." As Baraka finished, most of the Black people present rose to their feet and offered him a standing ovation.

The only voice that could adequately follow Baraka's eulogy was Baldwin's own. A recording of him singing "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" washed over the stilled crowd.

After more prayers and choral music, the recessional moved slowly back up the center aisle, this time bearing the black shrouded coffin, again to the sound of Olatunji's roaring drums.

For me, being there was richer than any words can convey. It made me recommit myself to my work as a writer, specifically as a Black writer who is simultaneously a political activist. I was reminded of why we do these things, when other more worn paths offer seemingly greater rewards and would certainly be a whole lot easier to walk. Memories of last Tuesday and returning to Baldwin's words will undoubtedly sustain me and many others for years to come.

If all of who James Baldwin was had been mentioned at his funeral in New York City on December 8, 1987, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, It would have gone out on the wire services and been broadcast on the air all over the globe.

A BROTHER'S TOUCH

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BUT IN PERSERVERANCE AS WELL !
BEST WISHES ON YOUR
10th ANNIVERSARY
AND TO IRUWA
The MN Chapter of NCBLG-
from
Dr. Michelle Evans, Saint Paul, MN.

Although Baldwin's funeral completely reinforced our Blackness, it tragically rendered his and our homosexuality completely invisible. In those two hours of remembrance and praise, not a syllable was breathed that this wonderful brother, this writer, this warrior, was also gay, that his being gay was indeed integral to his magnificence.

If I were writing this for a straight publication with a largely heterosexual readership, undoubtedly the question would be looming now: "But what difference does it make if he was Gay? Why bring it up especially at his funeral, when the point was to remember the best about him?" Well, Baldwin's being Gay and having witten about it with such depth and courage at a time when there was no movement nor even a few friends to back him up, was definitely "the best" about him.

If all of who James Baldwin was had been mentioned at his funeral in New York City on December 8, 1987, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, It would have gone out on the wire services and been broadcast on the air all over the globe. Not only would this news have geometrically increased the quotient of truth available from last Tuesday's

(continued on page 45)

HAPPY TENTH ANNIVERSARY!

Congratulations

and Best Wishes for the Next Ten

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and IRUWA, the Minnesota Chapter

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The Space In Me Where Baldwin Lives

By Cheryl Clarke

The American idea of masculinity: There are few things under heaven more difficult to understand or, when I was younger, to forgive.... On every street corner, I was called faggot....

—James Baldwin, "Here Be Dragons," 1985

James Baldwin was the first seriously black writer I read. I'd read Frank Yerby and discovered, like LeRoi Jones, that he was good for "at least one hard on." But Baldwin's writing said to me I could be black, gay, and live to tell about it. I've loved him all these manic years since I was 15 and first discovered novels. He showed me, in the stark loneliness of my Catholic adolescence, how to imagine those unspeakable experiences, feel those unutterable urges: for the same sex, the opposite race, and both at the same time. It was Baldwin, because he'd experienced himself as the love object of his own sex, who made me envision my own sexual possibilities in those early years. His work taught me that sexual passion and longing are rebel urges much as the slave's urge for freedom.

Through *The Fire Next Time, Notes of a Native Son, Go Tell It On The Mountain, Giovanni's Room*, and especially *Another Country*, I felt the poetics of resistance in black literature at a visceral level for the first time—the next time would be when I would begin to read black women writers.

I began my preparation for lesbianism with the reading of *Another Country* in 1963. I would not know this for ten more years. I learned three lessons from that novel: people are eminently sexual creatures; they are capable of a multiplicity of relationships in spite of the complications and because of them; and words are powerful aphrodisiacs. But because I was the Taurus child of a working-class-aspiring-to-be-middle-class black American family growing up in Washington, D.C., the citadel of the black bourgeoisie, I was seduced into repressing the lessons of *Another Country*. I moved on to more rational pursuits like college.

Though suppressed, Baldwin lived in me. I wrote a long paper on *Another Country* in my freshman year at Howard University. But by 1966, at the dawn of the Black Power Movement, Baldwin had become suspect and unacceptable to those black people (men) like Eldridge Cleaver and LeRoi Jones, who were formulating the criteria of blackness and whose books had to be read or at least carried around if one did not want her blackness called into question. "Equality of the sexes," interracial love, nonmonogamy, and certainly homosexuality were deemed antithetical of blackness. This was not a time for novels—not Baldwin's anyway.

But the burden of having read *Another Country* and having absorbed its lessons had finally to be borne. *Another Country* was an act of courage we did not witness again until Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. Most critics—black and white—unilaterally agreed that *Another Country* was a "bad" novel. Black critic Addison Gayle, a loud proponent of the black (male) aesthetic, accused Baldwin of "distortion" in his critical study, *The Way of the New World*—not so very different from what many black male critics were to say of Walker's *The Color Purple*, which *Another Country* anticipates. Even my high school English teacher, a white nun, warned me that the characters of *Another Country* are not real: "Real people don't act like that." But it is this novel, this panoramic representation of existential grief that most unequivocally epitomizes Baldwin's truth that no one is innocent. James Baldwin is the first and only black American male writer to treat the issue of male homoxesuality positively and realistically in fiction. Though his treatment of women in the novel is not particularly advanced—they are depicted mostly as groupies, band chicks, hangers-on, male-identified, or avenging angels—the book still lives in me. In re-reading *Another Country* recently, I discovered more certainly than ever in this discomfiting time, that I am Rufus Scott* in all his pathology and rage as surely as Baldwin must have seen Ida Scott as himself, relentlessly stalking this society for its culpability in Rufus' death.

The ugly-beautiful, bug-eyed black boy called faggot on every corner of the West Village until he migrated to Paris was always there to remind us of his pain and ours, his loneliness and ours. And he is *ours*, our native son. No matter who else claims him upon the safe and terrible occasion of his death, he is *ours*—in all his beautiful ambivalence over claiming *us* as his:

> ...all American categories of male and female, straight or not, black or white, were shattered, thank heaven, very early in my life. Not without anguish, certainly; but once you have discerned the meaning of a label, it may seem to define you for others, but it does not define you to yourself.[1]

I mourn him and I celebrate him—Jimmy

*The black male character of the novel around whose death the action of the novel revolves. Ida Scott is his younger sister.

[1]James Baldwin, "Here Be Dragons," *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985*. St. Martin's/Marek: 1985, p.681.

He Lives Within Us All

He spoke from Giovanni's Room, a bittersweet upsurge to the discovery of self, it will never be a forgotten purpose.
His piercing voice spoke to us, spoke about us and talked many times indicating our right to excel, thrive on that rhythm....
He gave the Souls of Black Folk to white people for them to examine their own true color.
He gave meaning to the word truce in as much as he had to develop them constantly with those who didn't understand Black Worth.
He breathed life into Lifeless forms forcing them to see and to become a part of something real that could easily pass you by if you remain still.
"Challenge not to be mediocre," he would say.
Amiri Baraka said of Jimmy, "This man traveled the earth like its history, he reported,criticized, made beautiful, analyzed, made us think, made us better, made us consciously human, or perhaps more acidly pre-human."
His work is my twentieth century treasures no one will ever destroy.
There is an eternal baptism of his words, praises are due to the preacher that never died within him.
Jimmy's death still presents us with America's contradictions, his rage is my rage....
Our mission is to continue to witness and write about the institutionalized and individual tyranny.
This generation has to live out the true dimension of his life.
He is the good news we need to spread,
So, Go Tell it On The Mountain and never
forget him, he means too much...!!

For: James Arthur Baldwin

philip robinson

Baldwin by Smith....
(continued from page 43)

media in general, it also would have helped alter, if only by an increment, perceptions in Black communities all over the world about the meaning of homosexuality, communities where those of us who survive Baldwin as Black Lesbians and Gay men must continue to dwell.

The silence of his friends makes me wonder about the silence in Baldwin's life, "the price of the ticket" he paid to be accepted by the straight Black literary establishment. I wonder if it was even discussed.

Although Baldwin was always frank about his homosexuality, he was not politicized about it, which means that he did not directly challenge the pantheon of African American writers and intellectuals to understand homosexuality and homophobia as significant political concerns.

For the handful of us who are out Black Lesbian and gay writers, our work is obviously cut out for us. Sadly, we must always bury our dead twice. The tributes in these pages are one effort to do that with an integrity missing from the official ceremony. Undoubtedly, we will organize countless memorial gatherings in the months and years to come, where we will not be afraid to speak of James Baldwin as a Black Gay brother. What galls me, finally, is that, as ghettoized as we are, our efforts will be largely invisible to all but ourselves, and will not have the kind of immediate and challenging impact that telling the whole truth at Baldwin's funeral could have had. Painfully, at his own funeral, among those who had the opportunity to speak, nobody knew Baldwin's full name, or at least they seemed temporarily to have forgotten it for the occasion. □ ★

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YEARS TO COME .
HAPPY 10TH ANNIVERSARY !
from
Emma Hixson, Executive Director
Minneapolis Dept. of Civil Rights
Minneapolis, MN.

best friends were Black.

There was not a significant difference between the two groups with regard to their attitudes toward other Blacks, though Black-identified respondents tended to report a stronger positive attitude toward other Blacks and were more likely to view their race as an important part of their lives than was common among the gay-identified respondents.

In keeping with the rationale of hypothesis 4, gay-identified respondents reported a higher proportion of their best friends, fairly good friends and sexual partners during the last 12 months had been white men. These respondents also preferred white males as their lover ideal more than was common among the Black-identified respondents. The gay-identified subjects tended also to report spending more leisure time with whites, and that a larger proportion of their neighbors were homosexual. Twenty-five percent of the Black-identified respondents and 5% of the gay-identified respondents reported that they would not date white men in the future.

Responses regarding involvement in both the Black and gay community was most interesting. Ninety percent of the gay-identified, and 76% of the Black-identified respondents indicated that they were not actively involved in the Black community. According to Johnson, "The negative themes of the Black-identified respondents stressed a sense of isolation of alienation from the traditional view of the Black community. Respondents also reported limited involvement with other Blacks. The attitude of the Black community toward homosexuality was often viewed as non-supportive. Respondents also stressed the strong impact of individualism... as guiding... the individual's interactions with the larger world. In addition to similar themes, gay-identified respondents defended their non-involvement by noting the range of difficulites they have experienced in trying to identify fully with the values and interests of the Black community.

Similarly, 50% of the Black-identified and 50% of the gay-identified respondents indicated that they were not actively involved in the gay community. Johnson explained that, "The negative themes of both reference groups emphasized limited involvement in the cultural functions and social life generally associated with the homosexual community. Respondents expressed difficulty granting exclusivity to homosexuality as the primary organizing factor in their overall identities. In some cases, public acknowledgement of their homosexual involvement was viewed as unnecessarily publicizing and, consequently, increasing their vulnerability to hostility or rejection. Covertness and discretion served as functional defenses against such negative encounters.

"The positive responses of both reference groups emphasized active involvement in the cultural as well as social and political dimensions of the homosexual community. Respondents stressed the importance of having a homosexually populated, or at least tolerant, support network available that may not necessarily be conceptualized as 'part of the homosexual community.'"

The three areas of "The Black Women's Relationship Project" which Mays, Cochran, and Peplau discussed at the 1986 meeting of the APA included: Sources of Support in the Black Lesbian Community, Relationship Experiences and the Perception of Discrimination by Black Lesbians, and Satisfaction in the Intimate Relationships of Black Lesbians.

In discussing the importance of empirical data on the sources of support for Black lesbians, Dr. Susan D. Cochran told fellow mental health professionals at the APA meeting, "Black lesbians occupy a unique status as a minority within both the gay community and the Black community. How do similarity and mutual reciprocity influence who they feel they can turn to for support? There are important reasons for concerning ourselves with the experiences of Black lesbians. An understanding of the patterns of perceived support may help to clarify the impact of social discrimination on the receipt of social support... There are many reasons

(continued on page 52)

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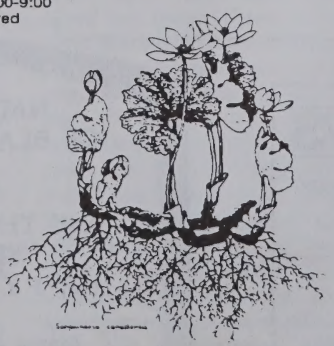

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Baldwin by Beam....
(continued from page 41)

hot room, I watched him pat beads of perspiration from his forehead with a flourish only a *true diva* could muster. He was a diva, yet up close he seemed quite fragile, having paid the price of the ticket for being arrogant, articulate and Black.

James Baldwin, who died at age 63, lived as long as he was supposed to live: 64 years is the average life expectancy for Black men; white men live seven years longer. He said much more than he was supposed to say: 23 works published since 1953. Not a bad legacy for someone who the Republic wished dead by age 14. Not a bad legacy at all, brother. □ ★

Angela and Jennifer
1979 .... and on.... and...

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!!!

The National Association of Black and White Men Together (NABWMT) including some local groups who are Men of All Colors Together (MACT) congratulates the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays (NCBLG) on the occasion of your Tenth Anniversary. In your tenth year of service, we are proud of our current working relationship which produced cooperative efforts via a joint brochure for the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, a highly successful Black Leadership Conference, a Centers for Disease Control funding of a NABWMT AIDS Task Force and many other projects and concerns. We wish NCBLG continued success, a long life and good health as you continue to grow and change ever mindful of your ultimate challenge and goal which is service to and for African-American, African and other peoples of color within the world community. We support your efforts and extend wishes for the best of luck in your future endeavors. Hanta yo! (Clear the Way!)

For NABWMT:
James Credle, Co-chair
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Barbara Smith
Leaves NCBLG Board

Barbara Smith, activist writer and main woman at Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, has fulfilled her 3 year commitment on the NCBLG board of directors.

Smith, editor of **Home Girls** and one of the founding members of The Commbahee River Collective, is also co-author of **Yours in Struggle.** Along with her countless speaking engagements, Smith will teach a course at Mt. Holyoke College (her Alma Mater) this fall.

She will be awarded at a Human Rights Campaign Fund dinner at Park Plaza Hotel in Boston on October 11th.

BEST WISHES !
NATIONAL COALITION OF BLACK LESBIANS & GAYS

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State Representative Karen Clark, Minnesota

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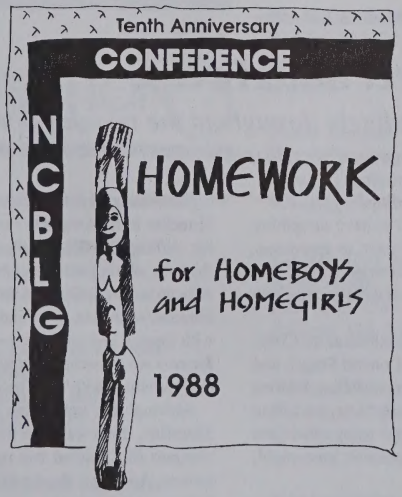

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Conference Call *(continued from page 31)*

Third International Feminist Book Fair

The 3rd International Feminist Book Fair which took place in Montreal, Canada, June 14th to June 19th was a huge affair coordinating scores of volunteers and hosting hundreds of guests from over 50 countries. There were women from the Carribean, South America, Central America, Asia, Africa, The Pacific Islands and Europe; and, of course, a large representation from North America.

The first two days were trade days set aside for publishers, booksellers and authors. The remaining four days were open to the public. An estimated 200 writers, researchers and publishers took part in well over 75 panels and workshops (most translated into English and French) focused around the themes of Memory, Power and Strategies of Feminist Consciousness. Over 175 bookstores, community organizations, and publishing houses ranging from small, independent feminist collectives to mainstream conglomerates rented booths in the main exhibition area. There were also films, art exhibits, readings, discussions, theater presentations and music performances.

The Book Fair was full of contradictions for many of the women of color (both Lesbian and heterosexual) who attended. There was the irrepressible excitement from talking, partying, comparing notes about our personal and political experiences, and coming to a greater understanding of the ways in which we are similar and the ways in which we are different. We had a chance to meet and talk with many women whose writing has inspired us: Joy Harjo, Gloria Joseph, Ellen Kuzwayo, Audre Lorde, Flora Nwapa, Sonia Sanchez, Barbara Smith and many, many others. The power and grace of the women present caused us to wonder again about the narrowness of experiences and ideas we encounter during day to day life in the U.S.

On the other hand, there were all of the expected sorts of frustrations and problems that seem to be inevitable whenever "dominant culture" women (in this case primarily white Quebecoises) "invite", "include" and "do outreach" to "other women," i.e., women of color, Black Women, indigenous women, working class women and so on. It never *really* works because it remains an insider/outsider situation no matter how dedicated, hard-working, and well-meaning the dominant culture women are, no matter how hard they try to "think of everything".

The low point was hit when members of the Congress of Black women of Concordia University, which had withdrawn its participation from the book Fair to protest racism, were ejected from the exhibition area by two white members of the fair staff. Several other Women of Color groups, including The Congress of Black Women of Canada, had been part of the organizing group and continued to participate, although they acknowledged and presented the racial problems as they saw them.

It was impossible to be in Montreal and not be impacted by the revealing glimpses of the racism in Canadian society. Many of us from the U.S. who were at least aware of the issue of cultural and political autonomy for French-Speaking Canadians still had not the slightest idea about communities of color in Canada. The Black Canadian community dates back for generations and has been virtually ignored by the media & educational institutions. During the Book Fair the territory of the Mohawk Nation (supposedly sovereign) was violated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We learned that women who immigrate from the Caribbean face work laws that are shockingly similar to Apartheid pass laws.

A statement was read by Black women on behalf of women of color and indigenous women at the final plenary session. It posed the questions which must always be addressed when the discussion is coalition building.

> "What does racism have to do with political struggle? How in the 1980's can we understand the subtle and not so subtle workings of racism so that we can be involved in the kind of coalition politics necessary to bring us into the 21st century? How can we forge political practice whose foundation is not simply *assumed* on the basis of gender and sexuality but which comes with active engagement in political struggle?"

—Kate Rushin

Sisterfire! Sisterfire! Sisterfire....

both as echo and refrain, were heard resoundingly throughout the two-day open-air festival devoted to women's culture.

On July 2nd and 3rd (euphemistically called Independence Weekend), women from many parts of the community—from close by and beyond—gathered together to celebrate and to witness a labyrinthine display of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural women's talent.

As was the intent of the organizers and producers of Sisterfire, this festival was more than a "4th of July alternative." From the first moments of walking though the gates of the Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland (this year's site), it was immediately apparent that Sisterfire was a celebration of sights, sounds, textures, and muscles, as well as a blending of diverse committees of artists, performers, volunteers, interests and agendas.

In the words of Amy Horowitz, (founder of Roadwork, producers of the event), Sisterfire "was conceived as an acknowledgement of women as vital creators of culture... [providing] a frame on which [women] pause to enjoy our sound and color, while getting on with the business of community building."

One was hard pressed not to have something to do or see and, most important, to appreciate, considering the impressive arrangement of performances during the course of these exciting two days.

With three main stages (identified as the Cove, the Open-Air Stage and the Concert Stage), and more than eighty performers, including Edwina Lee Tyler, Toshi Reagon, Holly Near, the Lillian Allen Band, Kate Clinton and many others too numerous to list, the performances, amazingly, ran-on and nearly on-time!

Also sharing the stage as MC's were Evelyn Harris of Sweet Honey in the Rock, Casselberry-Dupree, Alice Portnoy, Angela Sembrano, Urvashi Vaid, and Margaret Folley Requsters.

MC's Evelyn Harris of Sweet Honey in the Rock, Casselberry-Dupree and others shared the stage with signers (every performance had a signer) Shirley Childress Johnson and Ariel Hall, among others.

Most definitely, the spirits and moods of the Sisterfire festival were as varied and complex as the different styles of music presented. The rhythms of reggae, rock, New World music, African inspired, Gospel, Jazz, Folk, a cappella, feminist/womanist, funk and rap filled the arena with energy and exuberance. Clearly, the performers were reaching out to all of us—touching our yearnings with their own.

Although the music was a strong feature of Sisterfire, there was also theater, dance, and a two-part film festival that ended each day's activities. And, yes, the cuisine was down! In all forms and fragrances.

In its sixth year, Sisterfire gave all of us in attendance an opportunity to delight in each other's presence and to see women—so many of us hard at work with a fireceness of intensity—singing our songs, playing our drums, dancing our dances, weaving our stories with clarity and resolve—all in living color. SISTERFIRE WAS HOT!

—Nancy Hughes

"Looking in and Reaching Out!"

Highlights of the 1988 Convention of the National Association of Black and White Men Together

Sunday through Saturday, July 3-9, 1988, was the date for the 8th Annual Convention of the National Association of Black and White Men Together (NABWM), held in Boston, Massachusetts. Following are highlights of the convention.

Wednesday, July 6th witnessed the Convention Roll Call of Chapters – the 23 BWMT and MACT chapters from across the country were represented as well as a representative from the BWMT affiliate in Brazil, Grupo Gay da Bahia, and various NABWMT members at-large. By convention's end over 150 participants had registered.

The first day's round of workshop began with a moving opening address by A. Billy S. Jones, Health Educator with Whitman-Walker Health Clinic in Washington, D.C.

The mid-morning speaker was Mel King, an active member of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, faculty member of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, state representative and candidate a few years ago for the office of Mayor of Boston, a campaign noted for its successful coalition of grassroots organization commitment.

Afternoon workshops followed, which included: a) "Women of Color: Survival and Involvement in the Lesbian and Gay Community", with participation by Lesbian activists Angela Bowen and Terri Ortiz; b) "A Roundtable Discussion on Multi-ethnic/ Multi-racial Membership Development. c) "Interracial Dating". d) "Hispanic Men: Survival and Involvement in the Lesbian and Gay Community". e) "Celebration: Homosexuality Is A Gift".

Thursday evening ended on a particularly poignant note, with a Memorial Jazz Concert by Semenya McCord for people who have died from AIDS. BWMT/Los Angeles member Reggie Williams revealed the creation of an NABWMT AIDS Memorial Quilt, and read the names of NABWMT members who have died, in a moving presentation.

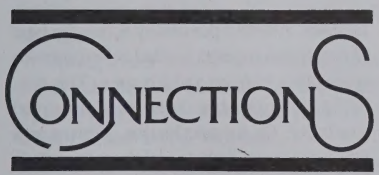
The afternoon series of Black, White and People-of-Color separate caucuses again proved to be one of the most valued experiences of the Convention.

The 8th Annual NABWMT Convention ended on an interesting note. Convention participants departed on Sunday, July 10th, pleasantly saturated with good vibes from the hosts, MACT/Boston, and others who had attended. However, the end of the Convention also witnessed a demonstration by Convention participants against the bellmen at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel, in response to a number of homophobic and insensitive actions by too many of them during the week. Called "Orchids and Onions", the demonstration presented flowers to various Hotel staff for their considerable cooperation during the Convention.

But very soon after, crowds gathered at the Hotel to witness over 60 NABWMT conventioneers encircling the bellmen's station to present them with onions, in order to emphasize the fact that Convention participants had spent over $50,000 in Boston, had given a great deal of revenue to the Hotel, and were therefore especially displeased by the bellmen's vitriolic behavior. "Orchids and Onions" ended with Conventioneers singing the NABWMT Anthem, "Yes we are sisters, yes we are brothers..."

The 9th Annual Convention of the National Association of Black and White Men Together will be held next year in Tallahassee, Florida, July 2-8.

–Lidell Jackson



National Association of Black & White Men Together
(Chapters throughout the USA)
584 Castro Street - #140
San Francisco, CA 94114

Gay, Bisexual, Lesbians of Color
Cornell University
535 Willard "Straight" Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853

Study Group on Black Lesbians
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P.O. Box 1258
New York, NY 10001

Salsa Soul Sisters
P.O. Box 1119
New York, NY 10009

Black Lesbian & Gay Centre Project
BM Box #4390
London WCIN 3XX
England

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Box 386
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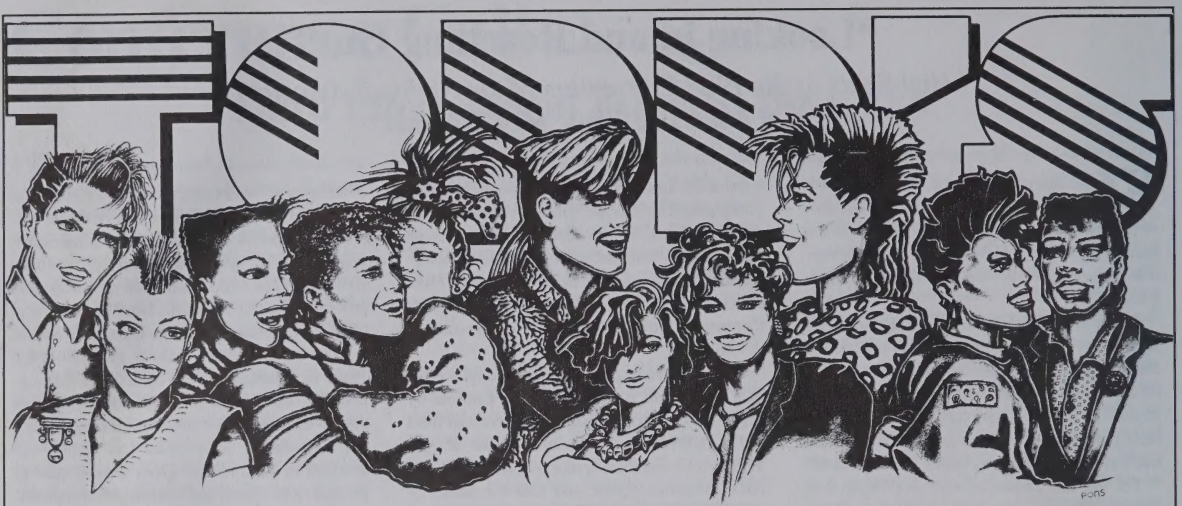

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Empirically Speaking—Harris *(continued from page 46)*

to believe that Black lesbians represent a 'status-disadvantaged' group: they are Black, female, and lesbian. All of these factors may contribute individually and interactively to potentially reduce the availablity of social support.

For this segment of the study, respondents completed a "perceived emotional support" questionnaire consisting of eighteen categories of people including: lover, co-workers, friends, parents, siblings, relatives, and general classes of people including Black lesbians, Black heterosexuals, and white lesbians. Emotional support was defined as feeling helped, cared for, or understood, and participants were asked to rate each of the above categories by using a five-point scale ranging from extremely supportive to extremely unsupportive (a sixth point on the scale indicated that no such person existed).

Cochran and Mays found four distinct sources of support in Black lesbians' emotional support networks. The most emotionally suppotive source was a Gay/Lesbian Support network. Family of origin and the work evnvironment were rated as being equally supportive, but significantly less supportive than the gay / lesbian network. Heterosexual support was the least emotionally supportive.

It is important to note that the gay/lesbian support network mentioned here differs somewhat from general notions about the lesbian/gay community in which most members are typically Caucasian. Other parts of the study indicated that two-thirds of the respondents had Black partners, and 52% of their close friends were either Black lesbians or Black gay men. Thus the Gay/Lesbian factor draws very heavily on these women's relationships with the Black gay male and Black lesbian community. It is also interesting to note that the structure of women's emotional support is not determined exclusively by ethnicity or gender, but rather by the dimensions of sexual orientation, kinship, and work.

According to Cochran and Mays, "...we did not find the kinship system providing the major source of emotional support for these women. This is in contrast to previous research on Black heterosexual women but similar to what is known about white lesbians. We do not know the cause for this at this point. Perhaps, homophobia reduces the amount of support women receive from their families. Another possibility is that the type of emotional support needed is best provided by other lesbians and gay men. This may be the dimension that determines perceived similarity. Or it could be that lesbians as a group are more likely to withdraw from their families for a variety of reasons including to avoid disclosing their sexual orientation."

Sources of tangible support were also investigated. Participants were asked to indicate if there were someone they could go to if they needed help with ten hypothetical problems. In general, participants perceived the Black lesbian community as providing the highest level of tangible support, followed by the Black heterosexual community, and finally the white lesbian community. Differences in levels of tangible support appeared to be based on ethnicity rather than sexual orientation, contrasting earlier findings on emotional social support in which sexual orientation was a critical dimension.

According to Cochran and Mays, "There are several implications from our findings. First, Black lesbians derive most of their emotional and tangible support from each other. Thus, the Black lesbian community is an extremely important resource for its

(continued on page 54)

A Call To Black Lesbian Sisters

By Terri Jewell

Despite the many Feminist treatises written during the past decade by Black Lesbians concerning issues that keep Sisters separated, a conscious "skin condition" still pervades among us. Though this topic has been discussed fervently in many arenas, treatment has been cursory in that we Black Lesbians are reluctant to face the nitty-gritty of our personal vulnerability when dealing with this particular issue.

This piece is in response to "casual" remarks addressed to a light-skinned Black Lesbian friend of mine by darker-skinned Black Lesbians at a Woman of Color Dance. The lighter-skinned dyke was was asked by one darker-skinned newcomer to the community whether she was Cape Verdean Portuguese or not. When the light Sister said no, the dark Sister insisted that she MUST be Portuguese "or something" to be so fair-skinned and still have the grade of hair (coarser than expected by this woman) that she had.

During a later "casual" conversation, this same light-skinned Lesbian was addressed by an intoxicated and dark-skinned friend as a "half-breed" and a "redbone".

The dark Sisters seemed to have no idea of the pain they had inflicted. As a result, the light-skinned Sister silently withdrew from them. I was alarmed by the ease with which the dark-skinned dykes essentially excluded my friend from being Black by emphasizing her light skin color. All four of us are in our 30's. When I attempted to explain to the dark-skinned dykes that they had hurt the light-skinned Sister with their labels, they each denied any malicious intention.

Unfortunate occurrences such as these are commonplace. Admittedly, oppressive forces surrounding standards of beauty and acceptability are at work and continue to wear Black women out. Nevertheless, we must stop using this as a convenient excuse to avoid the extraordinarily difficult work of setting ourselves free. Unlike white people, who refer to distinctions among themselves by hair and eye color, we do indeed use our many skin colors as an initial reference point. This is of no consequence until we begin to attach malignant judgments and prejudiced perceptions to our own diversity.

We Black Lesbians are all too aware of another's miseries:

> "Who does that high-yellow bitch think she is? Too pretty to talk to me?"
>
> "I am the darkest one in my family and I was always made to feel ugly and apart from my lighter sisters."
>
> "I see my fair skin as the mark of the slave master and I am very ashamed of that."
>
> "She was a beautiful woman but too dark for my tastes."
>
> "I feel more comfortable with white Lesbians. With my light skin, I do not stand out as much as I do with other Black Lesbians."
>
> "When I go to the women's bars, only the other dark-skinned dykes ask me to dance. We are usually relieved we can accept one another long enough to enjoy dancing together."

These comments and a wide variety of others on the same theme indicate that we Black Lesbians carry some level of self-loathing that may never leave us unless we undertake some serious self-examination and honest sharing. We bring these negative perceptions into our relationships with one another, living them out in acts of emotional and sexual game-playing and cannibalism, in which we consume the ones we claim to love most in instances of treachery, gossip and deceit.

It is important that we begin to really listen to how we speak and refer to other Black Sisters, to how we critically judge by color before we give ourselves the precious chance to learn what miracles we all are. We must cease addressing our skins first as others outside our culture do, and strive toward self-understanding and self-love. This can be gained if we only take a step toward that goal on our own.

> we must make totems
> how else can the spirits feel us
> how else can they know we must reach
> for them in ourselves/our spirits
> roam the skies the soil & the seas
> not unlike other deities/we require
> homage sacrifice & offerings
> those things we must give ourselves....
>
> —from "Box and Pole" by Ntozake Shange

As Black Lesbians, we must begin a hard journey toward ourselves. The excuses of the past grow weaker for us as the present time advances. We cannot afford to continue the dance into the fires of misconception and psychic self-mutilation. White Lesbians cannot carry us. All that is required of white Lesbians is their recognition that we are also dykes, but of a culture and spirit different from their own.

All that is required of us Black Lesbians is the recognition that a Black dyke with very light skin is STILL BLACK and belongs among us, and a Black dyke with very dark skin is NOT ugly and belongs among us. We must stop waging war against ourselves. There are too few warriors among us and too few lovers. We do not have the numbers to be so careless with our own. □ ★

Carol A. Johnson
Commends
N C B L G
on ten years of
achievement

and thanks her
life partner
for eleven years
of
loving commitment

Members, despite its small size and perhaps relative lack of instrumental resources. We do not know if this means that Black lesbians suffer deficits of social support. However, it is interesting to speculate on what the effects might be of this high degree of interreliance. One possibility is that Black lesbians may have less opportunity to minimize the negative effects of their social network interactions by turning elsewhere when conflict threatens.

"A second point is that Black lesbians generally perceive the White lesbian community as emotionally, but not tangibly, supportive. Analyses which we have not reported specifically compared levels of emotional support from Black and White lesbians and no significant difference was found."

When discussing the Relationship Experiences and the Perception of Discrimination by Black Lesbians phase of the study, Mays and Cochran explained, "We were interested in several issues associated with perceived discrimination. First, we wanted to know what types of discrimination Black lesbians perceived as salient, for them personally and for persons similar to themselves by virtue of some shared status".

"Second, we were interested in whether stable characteristics of individuals influence their experience of discrimination. Black women learn culturally-shared beliefs or stereotypes about race relations. For example, early in childhood, Black Americans are warned about hostile, negative behaviors of Whites toward Black. In addition, Black lesbians, like other women, are taught the desirability of heterosexuality, and may be admonished by Black religious teachings about the sinfulness of homosexuality. These early experiences may create expectations about discrimination. However, personal experiences of being treated badly may also play a significant role in reinforcing expectations of specific types of discrimination. Clearly, apparent demographic factors such as age, ethnicity, and gender, may elicit discrimination. Are there also other personal characteristics that increase a Black woman's risk of discrimination? For example, it is a common folklore among many Black Americans that Black women who look more 'African' in their physical features will experience more frequent discrimination by Whites and even by other Blacks. Similarly, lesbians may find that the more 'heterosexual' they appear in dress and behavior, the more acceptable they are to heterosexuals.' "

Mays and Cochran asked subjects to respond to questions about seven types of discrimination such as for "being Black" or "being lesbian", and respondents answered on the basis of frequency of the type of discrimination experienced by the group in general, and by themselves, as individuals. The first four types of discrimination dealt with women, Blacks, Black women, and lesbians, in that order. The latter three asked specifically about discrimination against Black lesbians by Black heterosexuals be cause of sexual orientation, by White lesbians because of ethnicity, and finally by other Black lesbians because of a lack of resources defined for participants as a lack of money, education or class status.

Overall, the respondents reported experiencing significantly less discrimination as individuals than they thought existed for their group in general. Results further indi cated that Black lesbians have experienced the greatest discrimination in their lives for being Black and for being female. The least frequent discrimination is for being a lesbian. Ethnicity appears to be the most important source of personally experienced discrimination in their lives.

The women perceived the greatest amount of personal discrimination for being a lesbian from Black heterosexuals, and for being Black from white lesbians. Class discrimination by other Black lesbians was least cited (remember that the majority of respondents have previously described themselves as middle class). The women perceived Black heterosexuals to discri minate significantly more than white or Black lesbians in general, indicating that sexual orientation appears to be the most important basis for discrimination in their perception of what happens to others.

Reports of personally experienced dis crimination as a function of sociodemo graphic factors revealed that discrimination for being Black and for being a Black female appears to occur more frequently to Black lesbians with higher education, lower socio-economic background, darker skin, and self-rated physical looks that are more butch or gay as opposed to heterosexual. Discrimination for being lesbian also seemed strongly related to class and butch/gay physical looks.

Regarding discrimination against Black lesbians, women who were younger, had lower incomes, came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and looked butch/gay reported more frequent experiences of discrimination from Black heterosexuals than did older, more wealthy, heterosexual-looking Black lesbians. Conversely, expe riences of ethnic discrimination by white lesbians happened to women of a lower socio-economic background with no regard to physical appearances.

Black lesbians reported more frequent instances of being treated badly by other Black lesbians for lacking resources if they, in fact, possessed a relative lack of resour ces. Women who had less education, lower income, lower socio-economic background, or physical looks that were not heterosexual reported more frequent discrimination.

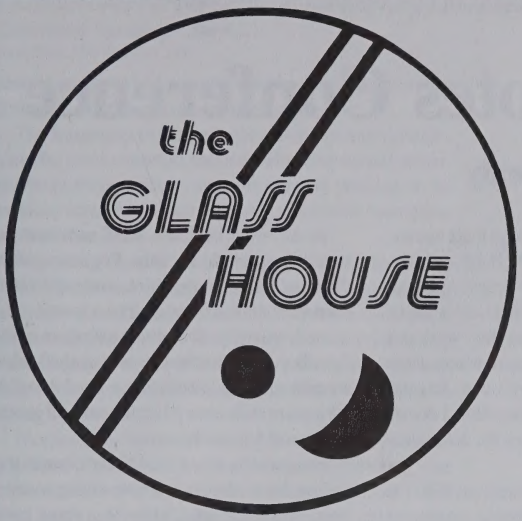
Further data showed that Black lesbians with white partners reported significantly more frequent discrimination for being a female, Black, and as a Black female, than did Black lesbians with Black partners. They also reported significantly more frequent ethnic discrimination by white lesbians. Apparently, the involvement with white lesbians does not lead to less frequent experiences with racism. On the contrary, Black lesbians who, it is assumed, live a significant portion of their lives in the white lesbian community by virtue of having a white partner, perceived more racism than those women with Black partners.

Satisfaction in the Intimate Relationships of Black Lesbians was another phase of the study reported by Peplau, Cochran, and Mays. The results from this portion of the study are relatively straightforward.

The participants reported having been in a total of three to four "serious/committed" relationships with another woman during their lifetime. Their longest relationship had typically lasted about four years, though the variation in relationship was two months to twelve years.

Seventy-five percent of the women said that they and their partner were "in love," while 17% said they were not sure about being in love, and only 8% said that they were not in love. Current relationships had lasted an average of two years. Most of the women considered their relationship to be a very close one, and indicated that they were happy with it. Most women said that they thought they had a good chance of staying in their current relationship for another five

(continued on page 57)



BECAUSE.

THE GLASS HOUSE, 950 W. MCNICHOLS, DETROIT
SUNDAY THRU SATURDAY 11AM - 2AM 342-4941
NO COVER FOOD AVAILABLE

Dear Bayard,
Thank you for your many years of wisdom, courage and leadership.

> *"every person who is Gay should join some Gay organization. Because he must prove to the world that he cares about his own freedom. People will never fight for your freedom if you have not given evidence that you are prepared to fight for it yourself. Incidentally, that's the reason that every Gay who is in the closet is ultimately a threat to the freedom of Gays. I don't want to seem intolerant to them and I think we have to say that to them with a great deal of affection, but remaining in the closet is the other side of the prejudice against Gays. Because until you challenge it, you are not playing an active role in fighting it."*
>
> *-Bayard Rustin*

PEDAGOGY & POLITICS

Lesbian and Gay Studies Center at Yale
Second Annual Conference
October 28–30, 1988

Panel topics will include:
Teaching Gay and Lesbian Literature • Lesbian Studies
Gays and the Mass Media • Lesbians and Gays in Progressive Politics
Representing Eroticism • Coming-out: Class and Culture
Gay Art and Artists Today • Latin American Literature • Gay History in Asia
Psychological Perspectives on the AIDS Epidemic

Registration opens with a reception on Friday, October 28 at 6 p.m.
and continues the following day at 8:30 a.m. at the
Whitney Humanities Center, 53 Wall Street, New Haven, Connecticut.
The conference is open to all and there is no registration fee.
Call the Center's answering machine at 203 432-0984
for additional information.

Lesbian and Gay Studies Center at Yale · c/o J. Boswell
Box 2585 Yale Station · New Haven, Ct. 06520

Dear Audre,

The depth and breadth of your courageous words travel worldwide to penetrate minds, hearts and souls.

"We are Lesbians and Gays of Color surviving in a country that defines human—when it concerns itself with the question—as straight and white."

"A Litany for Survival"

...and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid

So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.

Audre Lorde

Starting A Gay Notes Conference

By Dexter Sealy

Gay men and lesbians at Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) are well connected. How so? For example, through Digital: I met my lesbian roommate; I met my last S.O. (significant other) I keep abreast of the latest AIDS developments; and at last summer's Pride March in Boston, I walked behind a Digital banner with over 40 co-workers.

At work, I keep informed of MASS ACT UP meetings, Aids Action Committee events, local news and nationwide news. When, a year ago, I wanted to find out more about gay dating services, I turned to my co-workers. When a friend wanted advice about writing a will to protect his lover's claims, he turned to gay co-workers. Another friend wanted information about buying a house with his partner; he turned to gay and lesbian co-workers.

How is it that gay men and lesbians at Digital are so well connected?

(DEC) has the largest private network of computer systems in the world, with over 30,000 computer systems connected all over the globe. In Massachusetts alone, Digital has over 50 facilities and over 40,000 employees. One of the most widely used applications at Digital is electronic conferencing, also know as VAX Notes or "Notes". With Notes, employees on any computer system within the company participate in discussions on a variety of work related and non-work related subjects.

Within DEC, there are Notes conferences for giving directions to Digital facilities from airports, there are conferences on women and women's issues, conferences about jokes, poetry, cooking, movies, parenting, language, religion and several hundred other subjects.

I started working for Digital Equipment Corporation in June of 1986. After three months, I'd settled into my new job and started to explore. In particular, I wanted to connect with other gay men and lesbians at work. Naturally, I turned to Notes conferences—and found nothing about the gay and lesbian experience. I looked in the SINGLES conferences—and found two notes in several hundred that mentioned being gay—both without significant content and by authors unwilling to sign their names.

I posted a note in SINGLES asking, "Where are all the gay employees at Digital?" The next day I received a lot of mail from people telling me they were out there; that they too wondered where their gay and lesbian co-workers were. Several days and many mail messages later, I decided to start a Notes conference for discussing gay and lesbian issues.

Creating a Notes conference at DEC is simple. You install the software, create the conference, select a contact person, then add the conference to the corporate-wide list of Notes conferences. Since Notes was already installed on my group's computers, getting the software installed wasn't necessary.

The next step was to create the conference. Because Digital has a very decentralized organization, I didn't need to get permission from any central authority. I approached my project leader and asked him if I could create another Notes conference on one of our computers. He said sure, so long as I was willing to assume responsibility for its content. I created the conference and named it GDE for "Gay Digital Employees." Then I sent a notice to the corporate list maintainer with myself as the contact person.

There are two types of Notes conferences, restricted and unrestricted. In a restricted conference, Notes maintains a "membership list" and only network users on this list can gain access to conference. In an unrestricted conference, anyone attached to the network can access the conference. I wanted to make GDE a safe place. More important, I wanted to discourage curiosity seekers and anonymous writers. So I made GDE a restricted conference. Instead of publishing the location of the Notes conference in the corporate listing, my name was listed with instructions to contact me for more information.

Two years later, GDE has grown to over 500 members from all parts of the world, over 800 topics and over 12,000 different notes. In a typical week, 50 new postings are written in GDE and five new members join the conference. GDE has been responsible for making gay men and lesbians working at Digital feel connected.

In the larger facilities, GDE members get together regularly socially. For example, in Nashua, New Hampshire, over 50 GDE members meet for lunch once a month. The same happens with over 40 members in the Marlboro, Massachusetts area and 40 other members in the "Greater Maynard Area" (a 25 square mile area covering several towns in central Massachusetts).

Frequently, when a GDE member is traveling, he or she posts a note asking to meet members in the area, to find out about good restaurants or to find out about good night spots. Recently, a new member posted a note asking if there were any members near where he worked. The following week, he was having lunch with five new friends, three of whom worked in the same building.

GDE's influence, however, is more than social. Digital is a very progressive company when it comes to supporting its gay and lesbian employees. For example, Digital was one of the first (if not the first) corporations to have a person whose full time job is AIDS education within the company. In the past, Digital has made corporate donations to the Gay Pride Committee in Boston, and to AIDS support groups. This sensitivity and awareness within Digital is due mostly to the efforts of a few dedicated individuals within the company, many of whom met through GDE.

At Digital, GDE has helped relieve the isolation many gay men and lesbians feel in large corporations. Many of the members of GDE feel more a part of the company because there is a forum for discussing their issues. In GDE there are many examples of out gay men and lesbians who are very successful. These role models help others realize that being openly gay and being successful in a large company are not mutually exclusive. As more and more companies invest in computer networks, the opportunities for creating supportive environments similar to Digital's will increase.

Empirically Speaking—Harris....
(continued from page 54)

years, and about half thought that the relationship would definitely continue for five more years.

The frequency of sex in the relationship was variable, with the most common pattern indicating sexual activity two to three times a week. Forty-one percent of the women, however, reported having sex with their partner less than once a week.

Regarding sexual exclusivity, the majority of the women preferred monogamy, with only 11% preferring complete sexual freedom, and 17% taking a more flexible position. Less than 9% said their current relationship was completely open, 66% said the relationship was sexually exclusive, and 25% described their relationship as falling in between.

Women who lived with their partner reported slightly greater "closeness," and were more confident that the relationship would continue in the future. Women who lived apart reported slightly greater sexual satisfaction with their partner.

Drs. Mays, Cochran, Peplau, and Johnson have broken new ground in the field of social science as it relates to the Black lesbian/gay community. Their work has not only given these double-minority members voice, it has given us a scientific basis upon which to build the next stages of the movement of Black lesbians and gays. □

Chosen Books
120 W. 4th
Royal Oak, Mi. 48067
(313) 543-5758

The Midwest's Largest
GAY/LESBIAN & FEMINIST LITERARY BOOKSTORE

The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual employees of Digital Equipment Corporation support the NCBLG's efforts and struggles to eradicate, at its roots, the kind of ignorance that leads to homophobia and racism. And, we share the goal of promoting a society that allows for diversity.

We recognize that this goal can only be reached by building coalitions among all groups of difference.

Through the DECplus organization, Gay Men, Lesbians, and Bisexual employees have an opportunity to network and socialize. And, in an effort to promote a healthy work environment, DECpac works within the structure of our company to educate through the valuing of difference.

Contact us at: DECplus/DECpac; P.O. Box 331; Maynard, MA 01754.

ALTERNATIVE PRESS INDEX

Social Change Tool for the 80's

Ask your library to subscribe to The Alternative Press Index, if it doesn't already.

Libraries: $110/year

Individuals and movement groups: $30/year

Directory of Alternative & Radical Publications: $3.00

For more information write:

Alternative Press Center
P.O. Box 33109
Baltimore, MD 21218
(301) 243-2471

...A Quarterly Subject Index to over 200 alternative publications

Safer Sex
and Drug Use Guidelines

Assessing individual risk for AIDS and other illnesses is the first step towards using safer sex and drug use guidelines. Only you and your partner(s) can decide how much risk is acceptable — take stock of your sexual and drug use histories.

Be aware that the highest concentrations of HIV (the virus widely thought to cause AIDS) are found in blood and semen. The most common routes of HIV transmission are through sharing needles and unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse.

GCN's guidelines come from a wide variety of sources aimed at various communities concerned about the AIDS epidemic and health in general. We want to confront the prevailing "no sex is best" attitude and present an approach that is as sex-positive as possible.

Information for gay male, lesbian and bisexual communities

Safer sex can include: massage, hugging, kissing, erotic talk, phone sex, masturbation (solo, pairs and groups), using your own vibrators, dildos or other sex toys and s/m, butch/fem role-playing, fantasy scenes, bondage and other activities that do not involve the exchange of semen or blood (including menstrual blood).

Do not allow a partner's semen or blood (including menstrual blood and blood drawn from piercing, cutting or shaving) to enter your vagina, anus, mouth or breaks in your skin.

Use condoms for fucking (anal and vaginal intercourse), for licking/sucking penises and for covering dildos and other sex toys. Use water-based lubricants. Use latex barriers (dental dams or other plastic/latex materials) between the genital area and mouth when licking/sucking cunts and assholes. Be especially careful to avoid the exchange of menstrual blood. Using nonoxynol-9 or other spermicides with condoms and latex barriers may add extra protection.

For finger-fucking or fisting (anal or vaginal penetration with fingers or hands), use latex gloves or finger cots. Use water-based lubricants.

Alternative insemination may put you at risk. Be sure to discuss risk for AIDS with potential donors or sperm bank.

Be aware that some risk of exposure to immune-suppressing infections (such as mono and amoebiasis) may be associated with rimming (anal-oral contact) — use a latex barrier. Risk may also be associated with watersports (urine) or feces in the mouth, rectum or in open cuts. If you share dildos, vibrators or other sex toys, use condoms or clean toys with hydrogen peroxide.

Your body's ability to fight all disease, including AIDS and its related illnesses (such as Kaposi's Sarcoma and pneumocystis carinii pneumonia), may be benefitted by general good health — good nutrition, lots of rest, exercise and nonabuse of alcohol, poppers and other drugs.

If you use IV drugs, follow the guidelines below.

Intravenous drug use

Do not share works (needles, syringes, droppers, spoons, cottons or cookers).

Do not re-use needles; use fresh cottons each time.

If you must share or re-use your works, clean them as follows: dip needle and works into 100 percent bleach, draw up and release three times, dip needle and works into water, draw up and release three times (in an emergency, rubbing alcohol, vodka or wine can also be used). As an alternative, boil works in water for at least fifteen minutes. Use a fresh solution each time you clean your works.

Resource phone numbers

National AIDS Hotline: 1 (800) 342-7514
AIDS Action Committee (AAC), Boston: (617) 437-7733
AIDS Action Committee (AAC) IV Drug Use Taskforce, Boston: (617) 437-4200
Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), New York: (212) 807-6655
National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC), Washington, D.C.: (202) 544-1076
Women's AIDS Network, San Francisco: (415) 864-4376

OBITUARIES

Charles Angel, Jr., founder of GMAD (Gay Men of African Descent), died last November. One of the few outspoken Black people with AIDS, he appeared on many radio and television shows, including *Donahue*. Born in 1952, Angel was ordained a minister in his early 20's. He was fiercely dedicated to both his religious beliefs and to eliminating oppression on all fronts, including religion. He also carried within a strong consciousness of his African heritage, integrating it into all his work. Angel was a gay representative to the Rainbow Coalition and served on the steering committee of NCBLG's New York chapter.

—Colin Robinson ★★★

James Baldwin, novelist, essayist, playwright and civil rights activist was born in 1924 and died in December, 1987 of stomach cancer. (See Speaking of Baldwin, page 40.)

Richard Bruce Nugent, who was born in Washington D.C., died in 1988. During the Harlem Renaissance, he frequented Georgia Douglas Johnson's soirees where he met Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, W.E.B. DuBois and Edna St. Vincent Millay, among others. Nugent was the only writer of the Renaissance period to deal with homosexuality explicitly in his work, as in his short story, "Smoke, Lillies and Jade." published in *Fire!!* Born of middle class parents in 1906, Nugent's adopted lifestyle made him conspicuous because of his refusal to wear socks and ties and because he lacked a permanent address. He wore his bohemianism and homosexuality like a badge of honor.

—Charles Michael Smith ★★★★

James S. Tinney, nationally recognized Black Church Historian and Theologian, and editor of the periodical *SPIRIT*, was born in 1942 and died in 1988. Considered the nation's foremost authority on Black Pentecostalism and on the History of the Black press, he published books in both areas.

Tinney was also a political scientist, having earned his PhD in Black politics and Comparative African Government at Howard University, where he taught Journalism. In 1982 he founded Faith Temple in Washington, D.C. His essay, "Why A Black Gay Church?" appears in the 'Black Gay Antology, *In The Life*. ★★★★

BLACK/BOARD

WANTED: Great photos of Oct. '87 March on Washington--for picture book celebrating gay event (all sales to benefit AIDS project). Special events, lesbian pics and aerial shots esp. needed. Contact: OUT OF THE CLOSET FOUNDATION, P.O.B. 20084, Cherokee Station, New York, N.Y. 10028. Tel: (212) 288-4351.

ORAL HISTORY OF THE STONEWALL RIOTS I am seeking participants, witnesses, police officers, Stonewall Inn workers, journalists and other interested and involved people who were present at the riots in June 1969. I am also interested in interviewing people who were not at the riots but whose lives were directly or dramatically affected by them. Finally , I am trying to locate photographs, fliers, clippings, letters, diary entries and any other documentary material on or generated by the Stonewall riots. The book is planned for release by June 1989 to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of the riots. The proceeds from the book will be used to create a fund for gay archives and historical work. Please contact Michael Scherker. 135 Amersfort Place #6A, Brooklyn, NY 11210 718-434-6814

"NEMESIS"is seeking written work and photographs from Separatists, Lesbians, and Radical Feminists which tell our tales of heteropatriarchal disruption and womynpositive reality building. For more information send a SASE to: NEMESIS, c/o Amber L. Katherine, P.O. Box 417042, Chicago, IL 60641-7042. Deadline for submissions: Dec. 1, 1988.

All Chapters seek and welcome new members. For information on Chapter nearest you, contact NCBLG 19641 W. Seven Mile, Detroit, MI 48219

STEEL WALLS

"All Black Pen Pals Write. Let's Become Friends and Teach Unity/Love."
Mr. Edward Hackney II
133773 P.C.C. State Farm, VA 23160

I am very lonely and would like to correspond with some readers out there. I am a 39 year old Black man 6'1". 190 lbs. I'm into weight training, sports, science, reading, writing and politics. I have a degree in electronics from U/CA School of Engineering.
Michael Stevens C-12861, P.O. Box 2210 L2-244-u, Susanville, CA 96130

Christopher Henderson seeks pen pals. *P.O. Box 2210-L3-238-u, Susanville, CA 96130.*

Attractive GBM, 30, 5'8", 160 lbs. Healthy, well built, business administration major, licensed dietician, seeks correspondence from sincere gay, bi's and tv's for meaningful friendships. I am sincere. *Jami Jameson, P.O. Box 57-170895, Marion, OH 43302.*

I am suffering an agony of loneliness and reaching out to you for supportive encouragement. My name is Chris A. Mitchell, a 40 year old male prisoner, a former professional model and photographer. I possess a wide variety of interests. I seek correspondence from those with understanding. I have no hang-ups about religion, age race or sex. *Chris A. Mitchell #199-285, P.O. Box 56, Lebanon, OH 45036.*

Attractive Black male 5'11". 170 lbs, 31 yrs. Enjoys writing, reading and mellow music. Looking for effeminate Gay lover who seeks monogamous relationship. Will reply promptly. *Garry Jackson, #38010, Box 900, Jefferson City, MO 65102.*

L E T T E R

Dear Black/Out,

Hello, my name is Anita Olsen. I am currently in prison. I am a beautiful black Lesbian, and have two more years before I get out. A friend of mine gave me your address so maybe you could help me. I would like to know if you will send me your publication of Black Lesbians and Gays. I will be very grateful if you would. Also I have no people on the street I can write to - all my girlfriends are tied up if you know what I mean. Do you think you could have some Lesbian sisters write to me as I'm very lonely - I really need bad to write to some Lesbian sisters out there on the the street.- I will be forever grateful to you. Please Help!

P.S. Please write soon!!!

Love Ya,
Anita

Anita Olsen
P-8325
Box A
Bellefonte,PA 16823

P.SS. Also this my first time ever in prison-- I'm scared!

AIDSource

The following organizations (and others with advertisements in our AIDS section) do specific outreach to minority communities regarding AIDS and ARC.

Alianza Project
c/o KOBA Associates
1156 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20005
202/328-5700

Blacks Educating Blacks About Sexual Health Issues (BEBASHI)
P.O. Box 26388
Philadelphia, PA 19141
Ms. Rashida Lorraine Hassan
215/546-4140

El Centro AIDS Project
972 South Goodrich Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90022
Ms. Genevieve G. Lopez
Director of Community Outreach Services
213/725-1337

Haitian Coalition on AIDS
50 Court Street, Suite 605
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Marie Marthe Saint Cyr-Delpe
Project Coordinator
718/855-7275

Hispanic AIDS Forum/St. Lukes
114th St. and Amsterdam
New York, NY 10025
Mr. Paul Ruiz-Salomon
212/870-6785

Kupona Network
4611 So. Ellis Avenue
Chicago, Ill. 60653
Jane Kelly
312/536-3000

Milagros Project
c/o El Centro
972 South Goodrich Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90022
Arturo Olivas

Minority Education Committee on AIDS Ohio Department of Health
246 North High Street
Columbus, OH 43215
Mr. Jacob Gale
614/466-5480

Minority People Against AIDS Committee
P.O. Box 57641
New Orleans, LA 70157
Mr. Leonard Greene
Chairman & Founder
504/529-2661

National AIDS Network
1012 14th Street, N.W.
Suite 601
Washington, D.C. 20005
Gilberto Gerald
Director of Minority Affairs
202/347-0390

Minority Task Force on AIDS
92 St. Nicholas Ave., #1B
(at the corner of 115th St.)
New York, N.Y. 10026

National Association of Black & White Men Together
(See connections section)

National Coalition for Black Lesbians & Gays
19641 West Seven Mile
Detroit, MI 48219
313/537-0484

National Minority AIDS Council
5882 West Pico Blvd.
Suite 210
Los Angeles, CA 90019
Rev. Carl Bean
213/936-4949

National Minority AIDS Council
P.O. Box 28574
Washington, D.C. 20038
202/544-1076

Outreach Inc.
1422 West Peachtree N.E.
Suite 814
Atlanta, GA 30309
Ms. Sandra Mcdonald

Spectrum Project
c/o Koba Associates
1156 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
202/328-5700

People of Color AIDS Survival Effort (POCASE)
3177 Ocean View Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92113
Robert Henderson
(612) 231-9300

Working Together for the Needy Foundation, Inc.
A health program for AIDS patients
22 Halleck St., Newark, N.J. 01704
Tracey Cole
201/242-6533

Look in the AIDS Section pages, for more agencies doing AIDS work with minorities.

October 11th is National Coming Out Day. Are you ready?

Buy a gift subscription of Black/Out for friends you love. The perfect gift for a perfect price — $10.

Statement by Barbara Smith and Joseph Beam at Second National Black Writers Conference at Medgar Evers College, N.Y.

We are Black Lesbian and Gay writers

who are taking the opportunity of The Second National Black Writers Conference to go on record. We are well aware that despite our commitment to exploring gender roles and to challenging sexual, racial, and class oppression, work that has been essential to transforming the practice of African American literature in this era, the Black literary establishment systematically chooses to exclude us from the range of its activities. These include participation in conferences, invitations to submit work to journals and anthologies, serious and non-homophobic criticism of our writing, positive depictions of Lesbian and Gay characters, inclusion in Black studies course curricula, and all levels of formal and informal mentoring and support. If we are sometimes included in token numbers, it is often amid heterosexist protest and homophobic attacks. Because we function with integrity, refuse to be closeted, and address Lesbian and Gay oppression as a political issue, our lives and work are made invisible.

In spite of efforts to ghettoize and exclude us, we are part of a long and proud Black Lesbian and Gay literary tradition. The Harlem Renaissance could not have occurred if it had not been for its Black Gay participants, among them: Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Alain Locke, and R. Bruce Nugent. Historically, Black Lesbian writers have been less easily identifiable, but recent research has documented that Alice Dunbar Nelson, Angelina Weld Grimké, and Lorraine Hansberry are also members of this tradition. James Baldwin, undoubtedly the best known African American writer, gave us many positive depictions of Gay male relationships including those between Black men. Baldwin opened up new literary territory for an entire generation and served as a special role model for those of us who are Lesbian and Gay. Yet, since his death in December, 1987, there has been a concerted effort to ignore the fact that he was homosexual. The acknowledgement of our work as Black Lesbian and Gay writers necessitates a major revision of a currently homophobic and inaccurate Black literary history.

Black Lesbians and Gay men have always been here, as contributing family members in this country and before that in the Motherland of Africa; but, we have been frequently attacked as traitors to the race. Our existence is not what threatens the future of the race: instead the Black liberation struggle is imperiled by homophobic exclusion and emotional, physical, and sexual violence aimed at those of us who are Lesbian and Gay. Yet, we are alive, well, and living with dignity, carrying out the challenge of our difficult and much needed work.

Joseph Beam
Becky Birtha
Julie Blackwomon
Cheryl Clarke
Anita Cornwell
Doris Davenport
Lamont Steptoe
Jewelle Gomez
Craig G. Harris
Essex Hemphill
Isaac Jackson
Cary Alan Johnson
Audre Lorde
Alexis de Veaux
Pat Parker
Michelle Parkerson
Philip Robinson
Assotto Saint
Barbara Smith
Evelyn C. White

March 24, 1988

Empirically Speaking
Craig Harris interprets two surveys

•

Beyond the Rainbow
Angela Bowen interviews Jackson delegate Randy Miller

•

Speaking of Baldwin
Essays by Barbara Smith, Joseph Beam and Cheryl Clarke

•

A Call to Black Lesbian Sisters
Terri Jewell on skin color

•

Through The Years with NCBLG
A Photographic Journey

•

Conference Call
Summaries of Six Conferences